

JACK THE YOUNG RANCHMAN



GEORGE BIRD GRINNELL



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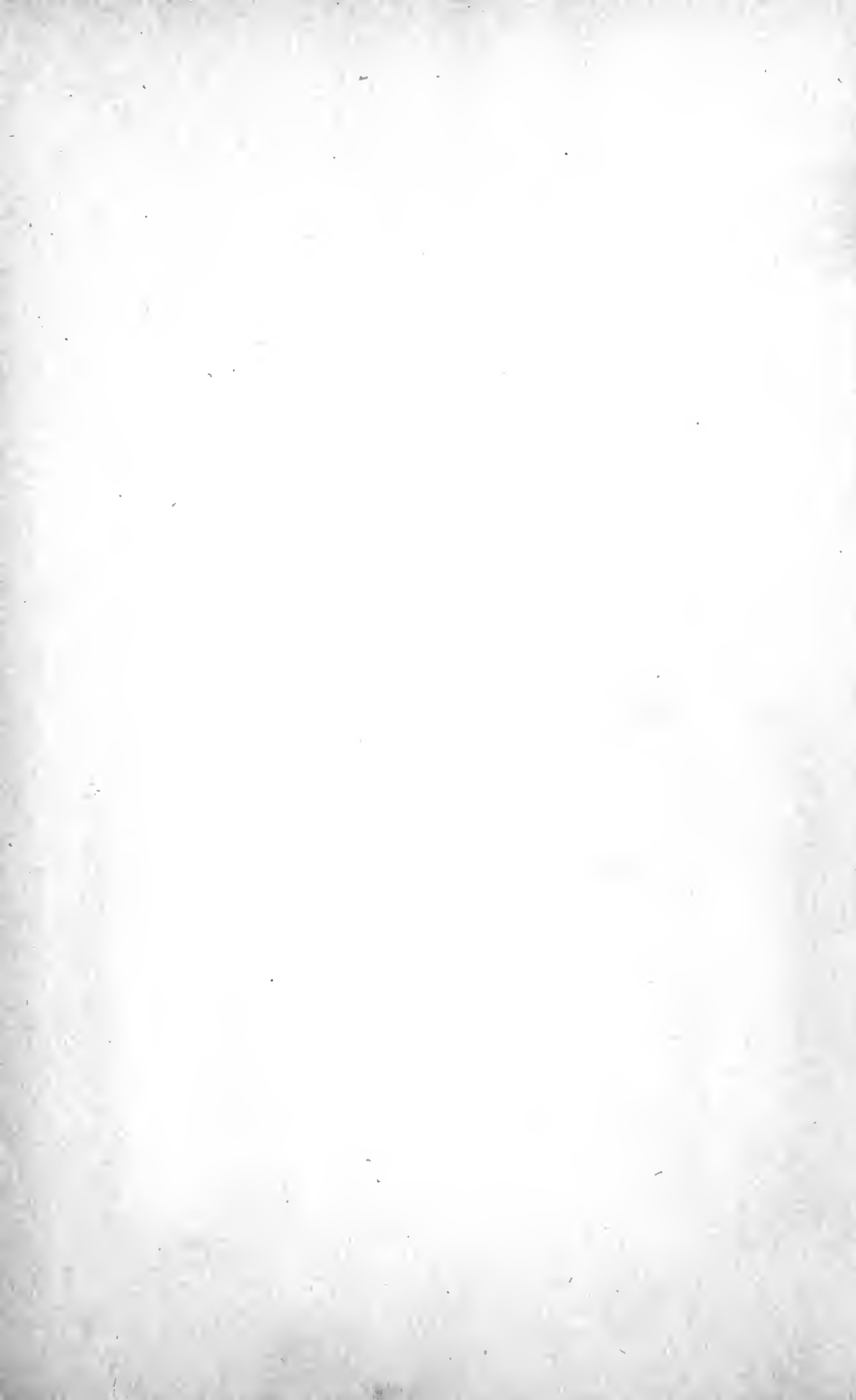
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Jack, the young ranchman

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JACK. THE YOUNG RANCHMAN



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"JACK COULD NOT UNDERSTAND WHY THE CALF HAD NOT BEEN CHOKED TO DEATH."—Page 101.

JACK, THE YOUNG RANCHMAN

OR

A BOY'S ADVENTURES IN THE ROCKIES


BY

GEORGE BIRD GRINNELL

Author of "Pawnee Hero Stories," "Blackfoot Lodge Tales," Etc.



NEW YORK
FREDERICK A. STOKES COMPANY
PUBLISHERS



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Twentieth Printing



Printed in the United States of America

PREFACE.

FAR away in the west, close to the backbone of the continent, lies the sagebrush country where the happenings described in the following pages took place.

The story is about real things and about real people, many of whom are alive to-day. The ranch lies in the Rocky Mountains, in a great basin, walled in by mountains on every hand, and 7,500 feet above the level of the sea.

The life there was exciting. There was good hunting—antelope and elk and bears and buffalo; and, far away—yet near enough to be very real—there were wild Indians.

It is a pleasure to review those days in memory.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. Jack Danvers.....	1
II. Prairie Wolves and Antelope.....	11
III. The Road to the Ranch	21
IV. A Grizzly Killed.....	30
V. Roping and Riding.....	37
VI. An Ancient Massacre.....	49
VII. Hugh Chased by Indians.....	62
VIII. Jack's First Antelope.....	72
IX. John Monroe, Halfbreed.....	89
X. Cows in a Snow-drift.....	98
XI. Jack's First Elk.....	107
XII. Antelope Kids.....	116
XIII. Jack Kills a Lion.....	125
XIV. Wolves and Wolf-hounds.....	136
XV. Digging out a Wolf's Den.....	148
XVI. Birds and their Nests....	157
XVII. Hunting on the Mountain.....	167
XVIII. With the Horse Roundup.....	180
XIX. Busting Broncos.....	194
XX. A Trip to Smith's Hole.....	206
XXI. Jack's First Campfire.....	214
XXII. A Load of Blacktail.....	225
XXIII. Occupations of a Cripple.....	236
XXIV. A Berrying Party.....	245
XXV. An Elk Hunt.....	254
XXVI. Jack Rides a Wild Horse.....	263
XXVII. A Mysterious Cave.....	274
XXVIII. What the Cave Held	285
XXIX. Swiftfoot in New York.....	297



JACK, THE YOUNG RANCHMAN

CHAPTER I

JACK DANVERS

THE door-bell rang, and from the library Jack heard the soft tread of Aunt Hannah, as she walked through the hall to answer it. There was a murmur of voices, and then Hannah's tones, loud and high pitched: "Guns! no indeedy, chile, ye can't leave 'em here. Not here, chile. Take 'em away. No, I don't keer if they is Mr. Sturgis'. Go 'way. I won't take 'em. Gib 'em to the policeman; ye can't get me to tetch 'em. Go 'way."

"What is it, Hannah?" said Jack, as he went to the door.

"Don't ye come here, honey. This man here, he's got some guns he wants to leave. Says they're for your Uncle Will. Don't ye go near 'em."

"These are two rifles that Mr. Genez has been sighting. Mr. Sturgis told him to deliver them here to-day," said the messenger.

"All right; give 'em to me," said Jack, as he took them; and the messenger ran down the steps.

2 JACK, THE YOUNG RANCHMAN

"Oh look out, honey, look out," said Aunt Hannah, shrinking away from Jack; "they'll go off and kill you, sure."

"Pshaw, Hannah," said Jack, "what are you talking about? "They wouldn't go off of themselves, and anyhow they ain't loaded."

"There, what 'd I tell ye?" cried Aunt Hannah. "Do be keerful. Many's the time I heard your grandpaw say them's the most dang'ous kind. He allus did say that it was the guns that wan't loaded that went off and killed folks. 'Deed he did."

Jack took the guns up to his uncle's room, and put them on the bed, and went back to the library. He had hardly got there, and gone to the window to look out into the darkening street, when he heard the front door close and a quick, light footfall in the hall.

"Oh, Uncle Will," he said, "is that you?"

"Hello, Jack, are you there?" was the reply. "I want to speak to you," and a moment later Mr. Sturgis entered the room and stepped over to the fireplace.

"Well, Jack," said he, "are you ready to start in to-morrow to be a cowboy?"

"Yes, Uncle Will, I'm all ready," was the reply.

"You're sure you don't want to back out now? You know," added Mr. Sturgis, "that you may see some rough times. Some days you will be wet and cold and hungry, and will wish that you were in a good house and by a warm fire, with a hot meal

ready for you. It isn't all fun and play and good times out on the ranch."

"I know that, Uncle Will," answered Jack, "but there must be plenty of fun, too, and I think I am going to like it."

"I believe so, too, my boy, but I want you to remember that there are two sides to almost everything. You will have lots of fun on the ranch, and that is what you think most of now, but you must remember also that it will not be all pleasure and no pain."

"Why, Uncle Will, don't you suppose I know that? A fellow's bound to be too hot or too cold sometimes, and to hurt himself now and then, but I guess I can stand it, and I don't think you need feel afraid that I'll want to come home before I have to." As he said this, Jack looked quite injured, and stood very straight.

"No, no, my boy. I don't doubt your pluck; but I want you to understand well before we start what it is that you have to look forward to.

"Now," continued Mr. Sturgis, "everything is ready for our start, and all we have to do to-morrow is to go to the train and get into the sleeping-car."

"Let's sit down in front of the fire and talk a little, Uncle Will. You have plenty of time before dinner, haven't you?"

"Yes, I have half an hour before it will be time to dress; I'll smoke a pipe and talk to you for that time. Now, ask your questions."

Jack Danvers was a New York boy about fourteen

4 JACK, THE YOUNG RANCHMAN

years old. He lived in East 38th Street, near Park Avenue, and Mrs. Danver's brother, Will Sturgis, had a ranch out on the Plains, on which were many horses and cattle. Mr. Sturgis spent the summer on the ranch, but often came to New York for the winter. The ranch was in a wild country, where there were bears and elk and deer and antelope, and sometimes buffalo and Indians.

Jack was not a very strong boy. He was slim and pale and spent most of his time reading, instead of playing out of doors as all boys should. In the summer when he was in the country and in the open air he grew brown and hearty, but through the winter he became slender and white again.

Jack had no brothers and sisters, and his parents were often anxious about his health. They had thought several times of moving to the country to live, so that Jack might have an out-door life all the year round, but Mr. Danvers' business was so confining that he was obliged to be in town constantly, and Mrs. Danvers was not willing to leave him.

Dr. Robertson, whom Mr. Danvers had consulted, had given much thought to the boy's case, and at last had advised his mother to send him out to his uncle's ranch for a year, or at least for a summer, telling her that a few months of rough life in the open air would do him more good than all the medicines in the world. When Dr. Robertson told her this, Mrs. Danvers at first thought the advice dreadful. She said, "Oh, doctor, I couldn't think of doing that. Why the life out there is one of con-

stant danger and hardship. There are cowboys and Indians and wild animals of all sorts. I should never have an easy moment while Jack was away."

"My dear madam," said the doctor, "medicine is often very unpleasant to take, unpleasant for the patient and sometimes for his friends as well. I can build your boy's system up from time to time with tonics, but I can do him no permanent good. My medicines are only palliatives; the real trouble is with his environment. If the conditions of his life are changed, he will be certain to throw off the lassitude and weakness which he now feels, and to become a stout and hearty boy about whose general health you need have no farther concern; but it is important that now, when eight or ten years of schooling and study are before him, he should have a well-nourished body. I know of nothing that promise so much in this direction as a course of open-air life and vigorous exercise. Now he stays too much in the house and cares for nothing but books. This is not natural for a boy of his age. He ought to be full of animal spirits and to be working them off by climbing trees, running races and fighting. Think this matter over carefully, Mrs. Danvers, and let me know what you and your husband decide."

After much thought and many long talks, the parents had at last made up their minds to let their boy go. All preparations had been made, and on the next day Jack and his uncle were to take the train for the Far West.

"Well, Uncle Will," said Jack, "first, I want to

6 JACK, THE YOUNG RANCHMAN

know how long it will take us to get out to the ranch?"

"Five days, unless something happens to delay us," said Mr. Sturgis.

"Next," said Jack, "I want to know what I can do on the ranch. I want to help in the work, you know, but I don't know how to ride, or how to do anything that you have to do out there among the cattle and horses. I'll have to learn a great deal before I can be of any use."

"Yes, of course, you will have to learn. You will pick up riding and roping readily enough, but to learn the ways of the prairie and the mountains is not so easy, and unless you are with some one that knows all that and tries to teach you, it will take you a long time to learn. You can easily learn the cowboy part of your education from almost any of us out at the ranch, but there is only one man there who can teach you how to become a good mountain man; that is old Hugh Johnson. He has lived on the plains and in the mountains for more than forty years, and has hunted, trapped and fought Indians from the Mississippi to the Pacific, and from the Saskatchewan to the Rio Grande. He knows the plains and the mountains better than any one I ever saw, and is like an Indian for reading sign."

"What do you mean by reading sign, Uncle Will?" said Jack.

"Sign is a word which may mean a great many things. Sign may be the tracks of animals, or of

people, or the smoke of fires, or an old camp, or clothing dropped by some one who has passed along. Anything that shows that animals or people have been in a certain place is called sign. Sign may be old or fresh, and there is always something about it that should tell you more than the mere fact that whatever made it has been there. You ought to be able to tell when the sign was made, and sometimes how it came to be made. Sometimes the sign is merely the way the wild animals act. I remember years ago, when the Sioux and Cheyennes were troublesome, I was travelling alone with Hugh, and one night when we camped, he rode out to kill a buffalo heifer. Before long he came back and told me that he had seen Indian sign, and that as soon as it was dark we must start and travel on all night. When I asked him what he had seen, he said that the animals were uneasy and the buffalo were running, and that some one was chasing them not far off. We hid our horses in a ravine and crept on top of a near-by hill from which we could see a good stretch of country. Sure enough, before long we saw buffalo running as if frightened, and a little later we saw, far off, two Indians chasing a little bunch. We lighted no fire that evening, but soon after dark rode away, and did not rest till we had put forty miles behind us."

"Do you think they would have tried to kill you, if they had seen you?" asked Jack.

"I don't know," said his uncle, "we were not taking any chances.

"Now, when you get to the ranch," he went on,

“you will learn a lot about the birds and animals, and if your tastes lie that way, and you keep your eyes open, you will find out much of the life of these wild things that few people know. Although I have been out there so many years and have always tried to observe things, I see every season something that I never saw before, and learn more and more how little I really know about the beasts and the birds of the west—even those that are most common about the ranch. Only last year I saw for the first time a little blind coyote puppy dug out from a hole in a ravine and was astonished to find that, instead of being yellow it was dark blue, almost black in fact. You could get a great collection of pets together at the ranch. Young elk, young antelope and deer and wolves, possibly a buffalo calf, some foxes, and birds of a dozen different kinds, grouse, ducks, magpies, young hawks. Why, you could have a regular menagerie.”

“Oh, what fun that would be,” said Jack. “I should like that. But how do you catch all these things? I supposed that young deer and antelope could run so fast that they could not be caught. I thought that they ran even faster than the old ones.”

“They can run very fast and they are hard to catch as soon as they are a few weeks old,” said his uncle; “but when they are quite young—for the first few days after they are born—they can scarcely run at all. During this time the mother hides them, telling them, I suppose, in her own language, to lie perfectly still until she returns.

The young one lies flat on the ground, and the old mother goes off a little way—not far though—and feeds about. If she sees any one coming, or if danger of any kind threatens, she runs away and only returns after it is past. Meanwhile, the little one, lying there among the grass or weeds or undergrowth, and keeping perfectly still, is not noticed by the hunter or the wild animal that is passing along, and when the mother returns, she finds it just where she left it. It is said that at this time of their lives, these young animals give out no scent, and so they are not found by the wolves, unless these brutes happen to come right upon them.”

“Well, but how do you catch them then?” said Jack.

“When we see an old doe antelope by herself on the prairie at about the season of the year when the young are born, we watch her and we can tell pretty well whether she has a young one or not. If we think she has a kid, we can get some idea of where it is hidden by the way the mother acts. Then the only way to find it is to go to the place and search the ground over foot by foot, until the young one is found or the task is given up. Usually both kids will be found side by side, but sometimes they are three or four feet apart. When they are taken up, they do not struggle or try to get away. They hang perfectly limp, and if you try to make them stand up, their legs give way under them and they sink down again. It is often twenty-four hours before they seem to take any interest in what is going on

about them, but when they get hungry, and after they have once drunk some milk, they are tame, and as soon as they become strong, very playful. Young antelope are not always easily reared, but young deer and elk are more hardy. If a buffalo calf is caught it can be given to a cow to rear. Wolf or coyote puppies can be reared on a bottle. Those animals do not easily become tame and trustful. They are likely to be shy and to dodge, and jump away if any sudden motion is made, but when they are pleased, when any one in whom they have confidence approaches them, they lay back their ears and wag their tails and wriggle their bodies just like an affectionate dog. Once we had a young bear at the ranch for a year and a half, and he was an amusing pet. If you gave him a bottle of milk he would stand on his hind legs, and holding the bottle in both hands he would tilt it up and let the milk trickle down his throat until the bottle was empty, when he would throw it away."

"Uncle Will, I think we're going to have a splendid time out west. I don't feel as if I could wait for to-morrow to come."

"It will be here before you know it, old fellow; and we'll be at the ranch before you know it too."

CHAPTER II

PRAIRIE WOLVES AND ANTELOPE

ONE morning, a few days later, a train was speeding westward among the foothills of the Rocky Mountains, bearing the travellers towards their summer home. The grey monotone of the prairie was unbroken by any bit of colour. The soil, the sage-brush, the dead grass that had grown the summer before, were all grey, unvaried except where a great rock or a bush taller than its fellows cast a long black shadow. Now and then the train passed close to some high butte, whose sides were gashed and gullied by deep ravines, and whose summit was crowned by a scattered fringe of black pines. Far off on either side, rose great mountains, covered with a mantle of snow, the most distant looking like far-off white clouds. From this snowy covering long fingers of white ran down the narrow valleys and ravines, seeming like white clasps holding the covering close in its place. The nearer foothills were white towards their tops, and against the shining snow the black pine trees stood out in strong contrast. Scattered over the grey plain were horses and cattle, most of them in little herds, but now and

then a single cow was seen and near her a staggering calf, which had just been born, to face the scorching heats and bitter colds of the high plains.

Suddenly as the train rushed around a low knoll, a dozen animals were seen, running swiftly along, parallel with the track, and less than three hundred feet distant. In colour they were bright yellow, almost red, with white patches and white legs, and two or three of them had black and nearly straight horns. They were graceful, and ran very swiftly, easily keeping pace with the train.

"Oh, Uncle Will," said Jack, grasping his uncle's arm, "what are those? They're not deer, I am sure, They must be antelope. How pretty they are, and see how fast they run! Why, they are going faster than the train, I do believe. They just seem to skim over the ground."

"Yes, those are antelope, the swiftest animal on the plains. And yet the coyotes catch a good many of them, just by running them down. Now, how do you suppose they do that, Jack?" and his uncle smiled at the boy's puzzled expression.

"I don't know. You said they were the swiftest animals on the plains, and yet you say that the coyotes catch them. That seems to mean that the coyotes are swifter. Doesn't it?" asked Jack.

"Not exactly," replied his uncle; "it only means that they are smarter—more cunning. A single coyote who undertook to run down a single antelope, would get very tired and very hungry before he accomplished it, but when two or three coyotes are

together, it is quite a different thing. The coyotes do not all run after the antelope together. They take turns, and while one runs, the others rest, so at last they tire the antelope out."

"But I should think that when the antelope ran, it would leave all the wolves behind, those that were resting even more than the one that was chasing it."

"It would do so if it ran straight away and out of the country, but this it does not do. Instead, it runs in large circles. When three or four prairie wolves decide that they want antelope meat for breakfast, one of them creeps as close as possible to the animal they have selected, and then makes a rush for it, running as fast as he possibly can, so as to push the antelope to its best speed and to tire it out. Meantime his companions spread out on either side of the runner, and get on little hills or knolls, so as to keep the chase in sight. They trot from point to point, and pretty soon when the antelope turns and begins to work back towards one of them, this one tries to get as nearly as possible in its path, and as it flies by, the wolf dashes out at it and runs after it at the top of its speed, while the one that had been chasing the antelope stops running, and trots off to some nearby hill, where, while the water drips off his lolling tongue, he watches the race and gets his breath again. After a little the antelope passes near another coyote, which takes up the pursuit in its turn. And so the chase is kept up until the poor antelope is exhausted, when it is overtaken

and pulled down by one or more of the hungry brutes."

"Why, I should think the coyotes would kill all the antelope after awhile," said Jack.

"Of course the coyotes do not catch every antelope they start," said his uncle. "Sometimes the game runs such a course that it does not pass near any of the waiting wolves, and only the one that starts it has any running to do. Then the chase does not last long; the wolves give up. Sometimes the antelope is so stout and strong that it tires out all its pursuers. Yet they catch them more frequently than one would think, and it is not at all uncommon to see coyotes chasing antelope, although, of course one does not often see the whole race and its termination. Often if a wolf running an antelope comes near to a man, he gives up the chase and that particular antelope is saved. It is a common thing for a single coyote to chase an old doe with her kids, just after the little ones have begun to run about. At that time they are very swift for short distances, but have not the strength to stand a long chase. In such a case a mother will often stay behind her young, and will try to fight off the coyote, butting him with her head and striking him with her forefeet. He pays little attention to her, except to snap at her, and keeps on after the kids. Several times I have seen a mother antelope lead her young one into the midst of a bed of cactus, where the wolf could not go without getting his feet full of thorns. If the bed is small, the wolf will make

fierce dashes up to its borders, trying to frighten the little ones, so that they will run out on the other side and he can start after them again, but usually the mother has no trouble in holding them. I have several times killed young antelope whose legs had been bitten up by coyotes, but which had got away. One hot day last summer a gang of section-men were working in a railroad cut west of here, when suddenly a big buck antelope ran down one side of the cut, across the track and up the other side. His sudden dash into the midst of them startled the men, and as they stood looking up where he had crossed, a coyote suddenly plunged down the side of the cut, just as the antelope had done. The readiest of the section men threw a hammer at him, and the wolf turned and scrambled up the bank and was not seen again.

"I wonder what the men thought?" said Jack.

"Two or three years ago I camped one afternoon near Rock Creek, and as there was very little feed, we turned the horses loose at night to pick among the sage brush and grease wood. Early in the morning, before sunrise, while the man with me was getting breakfast, I started out to get the horses. They were nowhere to be seen, and I climbed to the top of the hill back of camp, from which, as it was the only high place anywhere about, I felt sure that I could see them. Just before I got to the top of the hill an old doe antelope suddenly came in view, closely followed by a coyote. Both of them seemed to be running as hard as they could, and both had

their tongues hanging out as if they had come a long way. Suddenly, almost at the heels of the antelope—much closer to her than the other wolf—appeared a second coyote which now took up the running, while the one that had been chasing her stopped and sat down and watched. The antelope ran quite a long distance, always bearing a little to the left, and now seeming to run more slowly than when I first saw her. As she kept turning, it was evident that she would either run around the hill on which I stood, or would come back near it. At first I was so interested in watching her that I forgot to look at the wolf that had stopped. When I did so, he was no longer in the same place, but was trotting over a little ridge that ran down from the hill and was watching the chase that was now so far off. He could easily have cut across and headed the antelope, but he knew too well what she would do to give himself that trouble. After a little, it was evident that the antelope would come back pretty near to the hill, but on the other side of it from where she had passed before, and the wolf which I had first seen chasing her, trotted out two or three hundred yards on the prairie and sat down. The antelope was now coming back almost directly towards him, and I could see that there were two wolves behind her, one close at her heels and the other a good way further back. The first wolf now seemed quite excited. He no longer sat up, but crouched close to the ground, every few moments raising his head very slowly to take a look at the doe, and then lowering

it again so that he would be out of sight. Sometimes he crawled on his belly a few feet further from me, evidently trying to put himself directly in the path of the antelope; and this he seemed to have succeeded in doing. As she drew near him I could see that she was staggering, she was so tired, and the wolf behind could at any moment have knocked her down, if he had wanted to, but he seemed to be waiting for something. The wolf that was following him was now running faster and catching up.

"When the antelope reached the place where the first wolf was lying hidden, he sprang up and in a jump or two caught her neck and threw her down. At the same moment, the two wolves from behind came up, and for a moment there was a scuffle in which yellow and white and grey and waving tails were all mixed up, and then the three wolves were seen standing there, tearing away at their breakfast.

"Great Scott! that must have been exciting," said Jack.

"It was," said his uncle; "I had been so interested in watching this thing, which after all had not taken more than ten or fifteen minutes of time, that I had forgotten all about the horses. It only needed a moment's looking to see them, a short distance down the stream, and before I had got to them and brought them back to camp, I heard Bill's voice singing out breakfast."

"I always thought," said Jack, "that the antelope could run so fast that they could get away from all their enemies except hunters that carried rifles. Is

there any other wild animal besides the coyote that catches them?"

"Yes, the golden eagles often kill them when they are quite young, though if any old ones are near they will fight the birds and keep them from catching the kids. Once in winter I saw an eagle attack two kids that were feeding at a little distance from a big bunch of perhaps a thousand antelope. At this time the young ones were seven or eight months old, and so quite large and strong. The eagle had been sitting somewhere on the hillside and flew down over the kids to pounce on one of them. They immediately began to run to the herd, and when the eagle made a dart at them, they both stopped, reared on their hind legs, a good deal in the position of the unicorn that we sometimes see fighting for the crown, and struck at the bird with their forefeet. Perhaps the eagle was not very hungry, but at all events this turned him and the kids ran on. He made two more swoops at them before they reached the herd, but each time they fought him off in the same way by rearing up and striking at him. Of course when they got in among the other antelope the eagles left them and flew away.

"You know that in old times, before they had horses or fire-arms, the Indians used to catch antelope in traps."

"No, I didn't know that," said Jack, "how did they do it?" I should think it would have needed a pretty big trap to hold an antelope."

"It was something on the same plan as the way

in which they trapped the buffalo ; they built two long straight fences which almost came together at one end and were far apart at the other. At the end of the fences where they almost came together, the Indians either built a corral or dug a deep pit which they roofed over by slender poles on which they put grass and dirt. Now you have heard that the antelope is very curious. If he sees anything that he does not understand or can't quite make out he is likely to go up closer to it, so as to see what this object really is. The Indians took advantage of this weakness of the antelope and by means of it decoyed bunches of them into the space between the widely separated ends of these two fences. Other Indians were hidden behind the fence, and as soon as the herd got started down between these wings the Indians near the end of the fence ran out and got behind the antelope, which were then forced to run down towards the pit or the corral. If it was a pit, they broke through the roof in running over it, or they ran into the corral where they were killed by the Indians, who were hidden nearby.

“Down in Utah and Colorado, south-west of here, I have seen in several places the remains of these fences and corrals. I do not know that the Indians hereabouts ever caught the antelope in pits, but men who have lived up north with the Blackfeet and Cheyennes, tell me that up there they used the pits instead of the corrals.

“So you see, my boy, the antelope has his troubles like other people. It isn't all cake and pie for him,

even though he can run fast and lives out on the prairie where he can see a long distance."

"That's so, Uncle Will," said Jack, "I never thought of all these things."

While the two had been talking they had forgotten about the antelope, and these had now been long left behind. Now the train with a long groaning whistle plunged into the darkness of a snow shed, and a few moments later ran out past the border of a large lake, the surface of which was covered with ducks and geese which rose from the water until the air was fairly dark with their numbers. The whistle of the duck's wings and the clamour of the honking geese could be heard, even though the car windows were shut, and the passengers all gathered at the windows to look at the great flocks of birds.

When they had passed out of sight of the lake his uncle said to Jack: "That is the Medicine Lake, and the next stop is our station. Better ring the bell for the porter, so that he can have all our things together ready to put off."

"Well, Thomas," he said to the smiling coloured man who came up, brush in hand, "we are going to leave you now. Please get all our things ready to throw off. You know the train does not stop long."

"All right sir, all right," said Thomas, "I'll see that nothing is left. Hope you will have a good drive out, Mr. Sturgis. Nice day you've got. Don't always have such nice weather, this time of the year." And he brushed furiously.

CHAPTER III

THE ROAD TO THE RANCH

THE little cluster of buildings which the travellers saw when they stepped from the cars to the station platform was smaller than any village that Jack had ever been in. There were the station, the section house and the great round water tank, all painted red, and on the other side of the track a row of five one-story houses, four of unpainted logs, and one of boards, with large glass windows, evidently a store. Standing on the platform were a man holding a mail sack, two men wearing broad-brimmed hats, enormous fringed leather trousers, and small high heeled boots with great spurs. Not far from the platform stood a heavy spring-waggon, to which were hitched two good-sized chestnut horses, very nervous, or else half broken, for they were rearing and plunging and shying away from the train, yet were perfectly controlled by their driver, a large stoop-shouldered, white-bearded man. As the train drew out of the station, this team made a wide circle and then drove up to the platform, and as it reached it, the driver called out cheerily: "How are you Mr. Sturgis? how are you, sir. Glad to see you ;"

and he reached out and caught Mr. Sturgis' hand in a cordial grasp. "This your nephew? How are you, my son? I'm glad you've come out into this country to visit with us. We'll try to make a cowman of you before you go back."

"How are you, Hugh?" said Mr. Sturgis. "I am glad to see you, and glad to get back again. I have had enough of the town for a little while. Yes, this is my nephew, Jack Danvers. I want you to know him and like him, for I hope that you two will see a good deal of each other before snow flies. Jack has never been away from home before. He has everything to learn about life in the mountains, and there is no one who can teach him so well as you."

"Well, well," said Hugh, "I don't know as I'm much of a hand to break in a cowboy. I took to it too late. But let's get your things loaded. If you'll take these lines I'll pack the waggon."

In a very few moments the small trunks, bundles, gun-cases and bags were stored in the deep box of the waggon, and Hugh, stepping in again, took the lines and they drove off north over the rolling prairie.

The horses, which started with a rush, for a little time occupied all his attention. Old tin cans lying near the roads, and bits of paper quivering in the wind, caused them to shy, and often they tried to bolt, but the firm hand on the reins, and the low soothing voice soon quieted them, and before long they were jogging steadily and swiftly over the prairie road.

"They'll be a good team, Hugh, after a little driving," said Mr. Sturgis.

"That's what ;" replied Hugh. "They're good now, only they're a little mite skeery yet, but they'll soon get over that. I don't know as I ever saw a team that promised better. They're right quiet, too, when you get 'em going." Just as he said this, a great bird rose with a roar of wings, almost under the horses' feet, and the right quiet animals, turning at right angles, bolted over the prairie, the waggon bumping and bouncing over the sage-brush in a way that made the two men hold on for dear life, while Jack, who was sitting between them, clung to the back of the seat, somewhat uneasy lest he should be thrown over the dashboard. Gradually Hugh checked the horses' speed and turned them back to the road, and when they were again quiet, he looked down at Jack and said to him, with a twinkle of fun in his eye: "I expect this prairie isn't as smooth as some of your park roads back in the States, my son."

"My, no! It bumped, didn't it? and I don't think your horses are so very quiet yet, Mr. Hugh. But what was that big bird that made such a noise when it flew up? Was it a partridge? I've heard about the noise they make getting up, but I didn't suppose they were as big as that."

"That was a sage hen, my son. You'll see lots of them before night. It's getting along towards nesting time for them, and maybe we'll find some nests, and maybe get some young ones this spring.

I've raised a brood or two, but they always went off after they got big. Along in the fall, say in October, just before it gets cold weather, they get together in big droves, hundreds and hundreds together, and stay like that all winter. They're big, but they ain't much account. They taste too strong of the sage. The young ones about half grown are good eating, though not near so good as the blue grouse or the pheasant. Now, you take young blue grouse, just when they are feeding on the little red huckleberries that grow on the mountains, and, I tell you, they are tender and as nice tasting as any bird there is. There's as much difference between them and these sage hens as there is between a nice fat yearling mountain sheep in October and an old buck antelope at the same time of the year."

As they went on, Mr. Sturgis and Hugh began to speak of matters on the ranch, of cows and calves and horses and colts and brands, and of places and people Jack had never heard of, so that he paid no heed to their talk, but occupied himself in watching the prairie over which they were driving, and the wild creatures which lived on it. There were many of these, chiefly birds, and these of kinds new to him, familiar only with the commoner birds of the sea-coast. Most of them were small and dull-coloured, but not all; for, flying up from the road, yet often standing close to it while the waggon passed, were little birds with bright yellow throats and black chins, and which seemed

to have little black horns on either side of the head. There were great flocks of these, and Jack determined to remember and ask his uncle what they were. At one time a great, long-eared animal sprang from under a bush by the side of the road and half hopped, half ran off over the prairie. It was mostly white, and had long ears, and Jack thought it must be a rabbit of some kind. When it sprang into view, the horses gave a great bound and tried to run, and not until they had again been brought down to a trot was he able to ask what it was, and to learn that it was a jack-rabbit.

By this time they had gone quite a long way, and as they reached the top of a ridge, Mr. Sturgis pointed toward a range of distant hills which cut off the view, and asked his nephew how far off he thought they were.

"Oh, I don't know, Uncle Will; how far are they?"

"They are about twenty miles distant, and we have to go ten miles beyond them. Do you see that low place in the line of the horizon, just to the right of the horses' heads? Well, we go through that. There is a narrow valley there, and we go up that, and then over the hill and down into the basin, where the ranch is."

"What makes those mountains look so grey, Uncle Will? They shine almost like silver. In some places the mountain looks black, but it's mostly grey."

"The black is the dark green of the growing

pine timber, and the grey is where the timber has been burned, and is dead. For the first year or two after the fire has passed over the forest and killed them, the trees are black or keep their bark. Then the wind and rain and snow beating on the soft coating of charcoal, wear off the charred surface and the bark, and the wood becomes grey from the weather, just the colour of an old fence rail. The trees continue to stand for a good many years, and give this grey colour to the mountain side. Gradually the roots rot, and one by one the trees fall to the ground. Often they lie across each other, six or eight feet high, and this is the "down timber" which it is so hard to travel through. Sometimes it is even dangerous to pass through a piece of this dead timber. If it has been dead a long time, so that the roots of many of the trees have become rotten and weakened, the trees are easily thrown down by a high wind. I have seen a tall, thick tree pushed over by a mule knocking its pack against it, and in a gale of wind have seen the trees falling all around me. Of course, if one of them fell on a horse it would kill him."

By this time the waggon had begun to go down into some low but very rough and barren hills, cut up in every direction by ravines and water-courses. There was no grass and the ground was bare, except for low sage-brush here and there, and the rocks seemed to be bent and twisted. Sometimes a little pointed hill was capped by a great broad slab of stone, or again a narrow ridge was crowned with

pinnacles which looked like pyramids or church steeples, or men or animals. It was a queer-looking place, and not like anything that Jack had ever seen before. He asked his uncle about it, and he explained. "These are what the old French trappers of early days used to call *mauvaises terres*—bad lands—because no grass grows on them. The soil is all sand or clay, and very dry. All this country you see was once the bottom of a big bay where the tide rose and fell."

"Tide rose and fell, Uncle Will! How could that be? Where did the tide come from? I didn't think that the ocean was within a thousand miles of here;" said Jack.

"That is true to-day, Jack," said his uncle; "but the time I am talking about was long, long ago, in what the men who study the earth's history call Jurassic time. No one knows how many years ago it was, but it is safe to say it was millions. In those times the salt ocean, or an arm of it, lay just east of the Rocky Mountains and the water in this bay where we are now was partly fresh and partly salt. Great forests grew here, and strange animals lived among them and fed along the shores of this bay. If we had time to get out and look for them, we could find beaches, where the sand was washed up by the waves, and shells, and the bones of these great animals. A big book could be written about these bad lands here, just as big books have been written about other bad lands."

"They're surely queer places," said Hugh.

"I've seen it down in Kansas, and down on Henry's fork of Green River, and up in Oregon, where the ground was stuck full of bones and teeth. Some of the leg-bones was nigh as thick as my body, and some of the big heads had long teeth as long as my hand. They must have been big animals, and mighty dangerous too, I reckon."

"What makes the dirt all those different colours, Uncle Will," asked Jack; "In some places it's white, in others yellow or brown or black, and in some, bright red, like bricks."

"That red colour," said Mr. Sturgis, "is where the earth has been burnt. All through the soil here there are seams or veins of a crumbly brown substance, which is called lignite. It is a sort of coal about half made, and like coal it will burn. Sometimes a seam of this lignite catches fire from some cause or other, and may burn for years, baking the earth close to it. The heat turns it red, just as bricks which have been burned turn red."

By this time they were passing out of the bad lands and down into a flat through which flowed a broad river. There was no bridge over it, and Jack wondered how they were going to get across, but when they came to the water's edge the horses trotted in, were stopped to drink, and then walked on across, although the water came up to their bellies and washed and gurgled about the waggon, so that Jack began to think that perhaps they might be swept away. Pretty soon it grew more shallow, and then they came to the bank, and once more the waggon

started off down the valley at a brisk rate. Soon they crossed a narrow little stream flowing between deep banks, climbed another hill, and then turning away from the river, went up a narrow valley, shut in on one side by a high wall of rock and on the other by a great mountain dotted with cedars. On this mountain Hugh said there were some mountain sheep, and he pointed out to Jack tracks in the road where some of these animals had crossed that morning. Further on, in a broad rolling valley, they saw some antelope, but by this time the cold wind had made Jack chilly and tired, and his uncle wrapped him up to the throat with blankets and robes, and propping him up between Hugh and himself, told him to go to sleep. Just as he was about to do this, something happened which woke him up very thoroughly.

CHAPTER IV

A GRIZZLY KILLED

JACK was just dropping off to sleep when he heard, very faintly, Hugh's voice, saying, "Got your gun handy, Mr. Sturgis, and some cartridges? Get it out quick then, there's a bear coming down from that bluff, and he's liable to cross the road a half mile beyond here; I'll run the horses and we may get there as soon as he does; he can't hear nor smell us in this wind." The last part of this sentence sounded very loud to Jack, for the word, bear, had thoroughly waked him up. When he opened his eyes, he seemed to have the seat all to himself. His Uncle Will's head was down between his knees, and he was feeling under the waggon-seat, while Hugh was half standing up and putting the whip on the horses. They did not need much urging to make them run, and in a minute the waggon was bounding along the road, jumping and swaying so that Jack held on to the back of the seat as hard as he could. His uncle had found his rifle, and was hurriedly fumbling with the straps of the case, and at the same time muttering questions to Hugh, asking where the bear was likely to cross.

In a moment more the rifle was pulled from its case, a cartridge slipped into the breech, and then the waggon topped a little rise of ground, and there before them, just crossing the road, was a big brown animal that looked something like a big dog without any tail. As they saw it, the horses tried to shy out to one side, but Hugh was ready for them and held them firmly. Mr. Sturgis rose to his feet and raised his gun to his shoulder, but Hugh said, "Hold on, hold on; wait till we get to where he crosses and then jump out. You will catch him as he rises the hill." Meantime the bear had crossed the road and disappeared in a ravine, and in a moment more Hugh drew up the horses, so that they almost reared, checked the waggon, Mr. Sturgis jumped out, and at that moment the bear was seen only fifty yards off, swiftly galloping up the hill. There was a shot, and then another, and the bear turned over and rolled down the hill out of sight. The horses danced, plunged, reared, and then ran some little distance before Hugh could stop them. But Jack looking back saw his uncle wave his hand and call out a cheery "All right!"

In a moment the horses stopped, and Jack jumped out and ran toward his uncle, not heeding Hugh's call to him to wait. Before he had reached Mr. Sturgis, however, the waggon had passed him, and when he got to the spot his uncle and Hugh were unhitching the horses, and in a moment had tied them to the hind wheels of the waggon.

"Where's the bear, Uncle Will," said Jack, "where did he go to?"

"I think he is down there in the ravine, my boy, but don't go down there yet. We'll get out your gun and load it, and then we'll go down and look for him."

"That is the way to do it," said Hugh. "Don't never go near no game without your gun, and a load in it, and above all, when it is a bear. Don't go near him, even if your gun is loaded, unless you can see him plain and are sure that he is dead. It is better to stand off and throw rocks at him for ten or fifteen minutes than to go up close and have him jump up and hit you once."

Jack's gun was soon out of the waggon, and when it had been loaded, he walked down the hill by his uncle's side, while Hugh, who was unarmed, followed a little behind them. They soon reached a point where they could see into the bottom of the ravine, and there lay the bear, doubled up in a heap and apparently dead.

"Roll a rock down on him, Hugh," said Mr. Sturgis, "and let's see if there is any life left in him."

Two or three big stones rolled down the steep slope caused no movement in the bear, and very slowly they approached him, but he did not now seem nearly so big to Jack as when he had crossed the road.

"He is only a yearling, Mr. Sturgis," said Hugh. "Say about fifteen or sixteen months old, but he

has surely got a nice hide, and he will make a nice little robe for the boy here."

"Yes," said Mr. Sturgis, "but if we stop to skin him, it will bring us mighty late to the ranch."

"Oh, Uncle Will," said Jack, "let's skin him; what difference does it make whether we get to the ranch an hour sooner or later. Just think, this is the first big animal I have ever seen killed. I think we ought to take his skin along with us."

"All right, my boy," said Mr. Sturgis, "we will skin him; it won't take more than half an hour. Take hold of his front paws, Hugh, and drag him out to a level place, and we'll take his coat off; and Jack, do you go down this ravine a little way and see if you can find any water; before we get through we'll probably all want a drink, and certainly some of us will want to wash our hands."

Jack wanted to wait there and watch the operation of skinning the bear, but he did as he was told, and after walking down the ravine a few hundred yards, he found a place where a little water was trickling out of the side of the bank, and flowed away in a very thin small stream. There was so little of it that it was impossible for any one to drink, and there was no place where one could wash one's hands. He followed it down a little way further, and presently it fell over some rocks and into a little pool, almost as big as a water bucket.

Walking in the sun had made him thirsty, and he stooped and took a swallow or two of the water,

but, although it was clear and cold, it was very bitter, and a little of it was enough for him. As he started back to where the bear lay, suddenly he saw coming down the side of the ravine toward him, a yellowish dog, with a long bushy tail and pricked ears, and he thought at once of the Indian dogs that his uncle had described to him, and wondered whether perhaps there was a camp of Indians somewhere near. In a moment after, the dog saw him, paused for an instant, and then turning about, with long bounds, ran up the hill, and after stopping a moment at the crest, it looked back and then disappeared from view.

When he got back to where the men were at work he found that the bear was already half skinned, and while he watched the finishing of the work, he told them of the water that he had found and of the dog that he had seen.

"I guess your dog was a coyote, Jack," said his uncle. "There are no Indians about here now, are there, Hugh?"

"No, not yet, Mr. Sturgis. There's likely to be a camp or two travelling along when summer comes, but they haven't started in to move yet. The grass is not high enough and the ponies can't get any feed. I expect your boy saw a coyote."

"Do you mean one of the little wolves that run down antelopes, Uncle Will?" said Jack.

"Yes, one of those," said his uncle. "The smartest animal that travels the prairie, aren't they, Hugh?"

"They surely are," said the old man, as he gave a last cut with his knife, and then tore the hide free from the bear. "Well, now, Mr. Sturgis," he continued, "I will take this hide up the hill and tie it up, and then go down to the spring and wash up, and then we will hitch up and roll. We have wasted considerable time here, but them horses are able to travel good, and we ought to get to the ranch by eight o'clock; before nine, anyhow."

Twenty minutes later the team was once more swiftly trotting along the smooth road, and Jack, wrapped up in robes and blankets, was cogitating on bear hunting as he dropped off to sleep.

Jack was awakened by a sharp jerk that nearly threw him from his seat, to hear Hugh growl: "Well I didn't hit that crossing very well. Lucky I slowed up."

The waggon was passing through a shallow brook, flowing down from mountains which could be plainly seen in the bright moonlight to the left of the road. Their sides were patched with glistening snow, and one could follow the dark irregular outline of their crest, cutting off the star-dotted sky, but Jack could not tell whether they were near or far away. To the right there seemed a far stretching plain, white in the moonlight. It was all strange, and for a little while Jack hardly knew where he was, but gradually he recovered his wits, and moved and stretched out his legs.

"Awake, Jack?" said his uncle. "We're almost there now. Only a few miles more and we'll be at

home and get some supper. You'll be ready for that, I guess."

"Yes," said Jack, "I feel pretty hungry. It's cold too, isn't it?"

"Well," said Hugh, "you see it comes pretty near being winter yet out here. We're pretty high up in the air, and summer comes on slow and don't stay long when it gets here. I reckon you have heard the old saying that we have in this country about the weather. They say it's nine months winter and three months late in the fall. I expect that's because we have frosts and snow-storms every month in the year. Last summer in July we had a big hailstorm that cut down everything in the garden even with the ground, and knocked all the leaves off the quaking asps back of the house. The potatoes sprouted again and got about four inches high when there came another storm and cut 'em down again. So last year we didn't have no garden."

Before Hugh had finished this long speech, Jack had gone to sleep again, not to awake until he was lifted from the waggon at the ranch and was carried up to the house in Hugh's strong arms. The warmth and light of the room they entered confused him and made him still more sleepy, and he ate his supper in a daze and then went to bed.

CHAPTER V

ROPING AND RIDING

JACK DANVERS' sleep was deep and dreamless during his first night at the ranch, and when he was awakened next morning by his uncle's call, he could hardly tell where he was. As he jumped out of bed he saw by the dim light that came in through the small window that he was in a little room, furnished only with a bed, a washstand, a chair and his trunk. From the window he looked out on some level land, a grove of small trees and beyond them a very high hill, rising sharply and strewn with great stones. Gradually the drive of the day before and its incidents came back to his memory, and he knew that he was at the ranch. He dressed quickly, for he felt that there must be many strange things to see, and he did not want to miss any of them.

As soon as he had finished dressing, he opened his door and stepped out into another larger room, in which were chairs, a lounge, a stove and a good many shelves with books on them. This was the ranch sitting-room. There was no one here, but somewhere not far off he could hear the rattle of dishes, and passing through another room, he found

himself in an open door-way looking into the kitchen where a pleasant-faced young woman was cooking. She smiled at him as she said, "Good-morning. Did you sleep well? I guess you did, and I don't believe you remember much about getting here last night, do you? You were dead tired and were almost asleep while you were eating supper, and went sound asleep as soon as you were through."

"No, ma'am, I don't remember getting here at all. I remember the drive and Uncle Will's killing the bear, and the horses and Hugh, but I don't remember eating supper."

"Well," said Mrs. Carter, "you must be rested by this time, and now we'll have breakfast pretty soon. Would you rather sit here till it is ready, or go out doors?"

"I think I'll go out doors and look around, if there is time before breakfast," said Jack.

"Oh, there's plenty of time," said Mrs. Carter. "You'll hear the horn when breakfast is ready." So Jack opened the door and went out.

Standing in front of the low grey log-house, he looked down a little valley, bounded on either side by low hills and soon spreading out into a wide plain. Very far away on the other side of the plain were high hills, some of them brown like the near-by prairie, others white, like chalk. Over these distant hills the sun was just rising, and all the broad plain was flooded with yellow light. Down on the prairie not very far from the house some antelope were feeding, and beyond them on a hillside some cattle.

To the left were low log buildings—stables, Jack supposed—and some high-walled pens. Near the door of one of the buildings, hens were picking about, and close to the house three or four of these were quarrelling with a lot of black-birds over a bone lying on the grass, from which all the meat had been picked. By one of the pens calves were standing, looking through the bars, and now and then bawling to the cows that were being milked within. Behind the house was a high mountain on which grew pines, and high up on its side a number of small animals were moving swiftly, and behind them, one a little larger than the rest. As he looked at these animals they grew larger, and before long Jack could see that they were horses, and that the last one was a man on horseback, driving them. They came toward the house very fast and soon were plainly seen, and a little later the rumble of their galloping was heard, and they crowded into the corral. The man put up the bars and rode to the stable and unsaddled. Just after this, the horn sounded, and Jack saw his uncle, Hugh and two other men come toward the house, and soon all were seated at breakfast.

After the meal was over, Mr. Sturgis said to his nephew: "Now, Jack, I am going to ride out to day to look for some horses, and I am going to leave you and Hugh here to keep camp. Hugh is going over into the pasture, and if he has time after he gets back, he will give you some lessons in shooting. You had better go with him. You can ride

Old Grey for the present, until you begin to feel at home on a horse. I am going out now to saddle up. Do you want to come down to the corral?" They walked down toward the big pen into which Jack had seen the horses driven, but before they got to it a cloud of dust rose from it, and the horses were seen to be running around in it. Jack asked:

"What is frightening the horses, Uncle Will?"

"The men are catching up their riding animals," said Mr. Sturgis. "Run ahead and climb up on the fence, if you want to see them roping."

Jack ran on and clambered up on the top rail, just as another great cloud of dust rose. He saw the horses all standing, huddled in one corner of the pen, but one was following one of the men who held the end of a long rope which was about the horse's neck. Just then Hugh, carrying some ropes in his hand, came out of the stable, and unhooking the gate of the pen, went in, hooked the gate behind him, and walked toward the horses. As he saw Jack on the fence he called out:

"You've come down to get your horse, have you? Before very long we'll have you coming in here and catching him for yourself. You'll have to learn to throw a rope." He walked slowly toward the horses, and soon some of them started to run around the pen, always keeping close to the fence. Hugh held the long rope in both hands, the part in his left hand being in a small coil, while from his right hand a long loop trailed behind him in the dust. Suddenly he threw his right hand forward, the large

loop flew out and settled over the head of a small grey horse that was galloping by. The horse stopped short and turned toward Hugh, who walked away toward the gate of the pen, gathering up the rope until the horse was quite close to him. He led the horse through the gate, tied him to the fence outside, and taking another rope went back into the pen.

"Climb over," he said to Jack, "and come here. You might as well get used to horses now as any other time." Jack climbed down the bars into the pen, though it did seem to him as if it were rather a dangerous place, for he did not feel at all sure that the horses might not run against and knock him down, and then run over and trample him to death. They seemed to rush about like a lot of wild creatures. Just as he got to the ground, and was walking over to Hugh, the gate opened again and his uncle came in, and he too had a rope in his hand.

"That's right, my boy," said his uncle. "You can't begin too soon. I see that Hugh has caught your horse; do you think that you can catch his?"

"I don't believe he can do it the first time or two, Mr. Sturgis. We'll have to practise a little on a post first, but I thought he might as well get down here among the horses," said Hugh. "Now, son, you watch me close. Notice everything I do, so that you'll remember next time. Now, you see this rope is lying on the ground. Just watch how I take it up and hold it."

Jack saw that Hugh took the loop of the rope

with his right hand, and the free end in a small coil in his left hand, holding the end of the rope pressed against the palm of the hand with his little finger. "Now, d'y'e see," he said, "how I hold it? Your right hand must hold both the loop and the free rope about a foot and a half from the hondu—that's the eye the rope runs through. Then it will always keep open and run free. Always give a twist to the rope as you gather it; then it won't kink on you. Now, watch my right arm and the loop of the rope." He moved his right arm a little forward, turning his hand as he did so, and the loop flew forward and lay spread out open on the ground just before him. It seemed very easy.

"Now," said Hugh, "I'll catch old Baldy, and we'll be going." He walked toward the horses and they started to run, and as they started, he began to swing the rope around his head, and the loop was partly open. In a moment his hand reached forward, the loop flew out and settled over three or four horses that were crowded together, and they all stopped. Then a big bald-faced roan came out of the group toward Hugh, and sure enough the rope was about his neck. Hugh started toward the corral gate, leading the horse, and Jack was just going to follow, when the horses started again, and, turning, he saw his uncle swinging his rope, and in a moment he had his horse, and they all went out of the corral together. The gate was left open so that the horses that were not needed might go out on the prairie again.

The two horses were led up to the stable door, and there Hugh dropped the ropes on the ground, leaving them standing there, not tied to anything. As he entered the door he said to Jack :

“Come in, son, and I’ll show you your saddle and bridle and blanket. You know every man here has his own saddle, and no one ever uses it except the man that owns it. Your saddle is here, and you ought always to hang it on its peg, and hang bridle, blanket and rope over it, so that they won’t get dirty or be gnawed by anything, and so you’ll always know where they are. You see, if you lose your things you’ll have to go without any. No one’ll lend you theirs. Now, the first thing you’ve got to learn is how to saddle your horse. I’ll saddle old Baldy first, and you watch me close and try to see what I do. You see,” he said, as he took down from a peg a great saddle with a high horn and big wooden stirrups, “these saddles that we use out here are different from the little flat things that they ride in the States. I saw one of them once. An Englishman had it, and it was queer for a fact. I thought the man would slip off it every time the horse gave a jump, but he didn’t. He stuck to it good. Only he got all raw after he’d been riding it a month or two. Now, these saddles are hard, made of wood and leather, so we have to put plenty of blanket under ’em to keep the horse’s back from getting sore. You see, this blanket is folded so that it’s just a little longer and a little wider than the saddle. There’s about three or four inches in

front of the saddle, and three or four behind. Now I throw it on old Baldy, so that the front edge comes just about where the mane ends on the withers, and then I pass my hand all over it to see that there ain't any wrinkles in the folds. If wrinkles are there they're liable to press on the horse's back and make it sore. When it's all smooth, the saddle goes on like this," and grasping the heavy saddle by its horn he swung it over the horse's back, so that stirrups and cinches swung clear, and the saddle fell in its place. "Now, these cinches, you see, come up to meet the latigo straps on this side. You reach under the horse's chest and get hold of the forward cinch first, slip the latigo through the ring, and then through the saddle ring, and again through the cinch ring and saddle ring, and then pull, until the cinch is tight, so, and tie the strap like that. The flank cinch you don't pull so tight; if you pull on that too much, it is liable to make your horse buck. Now, the bridle; always leave your reins hanging down over the head when you get off, and then your horse won't move.

"Now, I'll saddle up your horse. I guess you'll find those stirrups about right. I fixed 'em for you last night when you was in bed. I'll tie up your rope here to these strings. You won't need it with Old Grey. He won't run away, even if you do get off and go and leave him." Then he saddled the grey with Jack's saddle.

"Now, let's see you mount. Here, stand by your horse's left shoulder and gather up your reins in

your left hand. Now, catch hold of the mane with the same hand. Now, face a little toward the saddle and take the stirrup in your right hand, turn it so that the open end is toward you, and put your left foot in it. Now, take hold of the horn and pull yourself up from the ground. Go ahead, you won't fall; that's it; now, put your leg over, and there you are. After two or three times you'll be all right."

As he spoke thus, Hugh stepped into his own saddle and, stooping, began to gather up his rope which was still on the ground, and then lifting his bridle rein, his horse started to walk toward the house. Jack sat on his horse, feeling a little queer and wondering what he should do when his horse began to move. But it did not move; it stood there with its head hanging down as if asleep. In a moment Hugh looked around and called out, "Come on, son, lift your bridle rein and put your heel against his side and he'll start." Jack did this, and his horse seemed to wake up, and moved on.

As they rode on, side by side, Hugh explained to Jack which hand he should hold his reins in, how to guide his horse, by moving his hand to the left or to the right, so that the reins would press on the side of the neck away from that toward which he wished to turn, and how to hold on to his horse with his legs. He told him a good deal about riding and roping and handling horses and cattle, but much of it Jack hardly understood, and perhaps Hugh thought of this, for in a little while he began to point out the different hills and stream valleys,

and to tell Jack the name of each. He showed him the points of the compass, and explained to him how to guess the direction by the position of the sun in the sky.

They were riding along the foot of the mountain, and crossing little valleys with steep ridges between. Down each valley ran a foaming brook and on each ridge grew sage-brush, and among the sage-brush were many great rocks, most of them smoothed and polished. A little way off, these big stones sometimes looked like animals lying down.

"We're going over to look at some cows that we've been keeping in this pasture all winter," said Hugh, as they rode up one of the hillsides. "They're right tame and we can ride right in among them. They're beginning to have their calves now, and I like to go over every day and look at 'em, to try to keep 'em together. There's lots of coyotes around, and they take a calf now and then, if they can get it and its mother away from the bunch. I put some baits out the last heavy snow we had, and got five of 'em, and the next snow that comes I'll put out some more. They're getting pretty smart though, and don't take poison like they used to in old times."

"How do you manage to poison them, Hugh?" asked Jack. Hugh did not answer, but pointed across a valley to a bit of hillside that had just come in view, and said, "There's a bunch of coyotes now trying to get a calf. Come on." And without a word more he galloped away. Jack had just time to see that he was riding toward an animal about

which a lot of smaller animals were dancing, when suddenly old Grey threw up his head and began to gallop after Hugh, and for a few minutes Jack had all he could do to keep from falling off his horse, as it wound in and out among the rocks and the sagebrush. It seemed pretty rough riding, and he had an awful pain in his side, but pretty soon his horse stopped galloping and began to walk, and he saw that he was near Hugh, who was sitting on his horse, looking at a cow, close by which stood a little tottering calf. The cow seemed angry and shook her head as if she would like to charge on the horses.

"Look at that fool of a critter," said the old man, "she left the bunch and came near losing her calf by coyotes, and now she wants to fight us for driving them off. I always did say that cows had no sense."

"Were those coyotes that were running around? I could not see very well, because old Grey was going so fast, and I had a hard time to keep from falling off," said Jack.

"Well, well, you'll have to learn to stick on to your horse. I forgot that you wan't used to riding. We'll sure have to practise riding," said Hugh. "Now, let's drive this heifer over to the bunch. She's in big luck that she didn't lose that calf, young as it is."

"I thought coyotes were little animals, and I should think that a big cow could keep them away, and that all the calf would have to do would be to stay close to its mother."

"That would be all right, son, if the cow and calf had just a little bit of sense, but you see that's just what they ain't got. The coyotes get around them, and first one and then another makes a dash at the cow and tries to make her mad, or to scare her calf away from her. If the calf leaves its mother only a little way it gets a bite, and if the cow gets mad and begins to chase the coyotes, very likely the calf gets left behind, and may be gets two or three bites, or even gets pulled down. The only safe place for a calf is right close by its mother's side. Now, I believe that cow has quieted down, so that we can start her toward the bunch. You stop here till I see."

Hugh rode toward the cow, calling at her, and after a moment she turned and walked away from him, the calf staggering at her side. "Come on," called Hugh. "She'll go all right now."

They rode on behind the cow for a mile or two, and then, after crossing a ridge, saw down in the flat before them more than a hundred cows and calves. They rode down among them, when the cow that they had been driving stopped, and then after Hugh had looked at some of the animals, he said, "Now, I am going up there where there's a warm spot to smoke. After that, we'll go back to the house."

A little way up the valley was a clump of trees, and near these the two stopped, dismounted, and threw down their reins and sat down, while the horses fed near by.

CHAPTER VI

AN ANCIENT MASSACRE

IT was warm and pleasant where they sat, in the sun and out of the wind, though on the mountain behind them great drifts of snow lay in the ravines. Hugh had taken from his pocket a black wooden pipe and a plug of tobacco, and was shaving off the tobacco into the palm of his hand. Soon he had a pipeful, and crushing it between his palms, he filled his pipe and lighted it. As he leaned back and blew out the streams of white smoke from his nostrils, he pointed to a near-by hill and said :

“We’ll go around that hill going back, and I’ll show you a place where there was quite a killing of Indians a good many years back. It was before my time in this country, more than forty years ago, but I knew some of the men that was in the fight, if you can call it a fight where there wasn’t no fighting. There’s lots of old lodge poles and bones lying on the ground there yet, and I can remember years ago, they was old rotten robes and all kinds of truck lying around. The men that did the killing didn’t carry anything away. They just killed everything in the camp that was alive, and then went off and left it.”

"I think I've heard my uncle tell about that, but I wish you would tell me the story, Hugh. I'd like to hear it," said Jack.

"I'll tell you all I've heard of it, but let's wait till we get to the place. Now we've got to sit here and smoke, and then we'll go home that way, and then this afternoon I want you to take your rifle and come out and we'll see how it's sighted. Then maybe in two or three days we'll go out and kill a buck antelope. That's about the only meat that's good now. Well," he continued after a time, as he knocked the ashes from his pipe, "let's be moving. Let's see you mount now. That's good.

"Now, we'll have to ride a little faster if we're going to stop at that old killing ground. So come on. Try to hold your saddle tight between your legs, and swing with your horse. You'll get into it in only a short while. Come on, now."

Hugh started his horse, and Jack did the same, and they galloped off together. At first the boy bounced about a good deal, but after a little he began to see what Hugh meant, and by sitting back a little in the saddle and easing himself with his toes when the horse struck the ground, he sat more comfortably, and before he had gone very far he began to enjoy his ride. The cool wind blew against his face and through his hair, the sun was bright, little birds rose from the prairie as they galloped along, and it was very pleasant. He looked up at Hugh, who was watching him with a kindly smile, and laughed outright. "It's splendid, isn't it?" he said.

Hugh answered something, but the wind blew his words away.

Presently Hugh drew in his horse and they turned and rode up over a little hill and stopped, looking across a narrow valley through which a little stream flowed. On the other side, only a short way off, in a half circle, rose another hill on which grew many cedar bushes among the great rocks. In the valley many grey sticks were lying on the ground, and here and there among the sticks were spots of white. "There's the place," said Hugh, "where the camp was wiped out. Let's 'light down here, and I'll fill my pipe and tell you the story."

When his pipe was going well he turned to Jack, and said: "It was a camp of fifteen lodges of 'Rapahoes, and the white men was a bunch of thirty trappers. This is the way I heard it. It was more than forty years ago that a war-party of 'Rapahoes attacked a small train of emigrants and killed them all, except one young boy about as old as you, who hid in the brush when the charge was made. A few days later a couple of trappers came along that way and found the boy. He told them the story, and when they looked around over the place where the killing was done, they found that it was 'Rapahoes that done it. These two men took the boy with them, and they made up their minds that the 'Rapahoes had got to sweat for this, and when they got into the Fort they told other men about it, and they all figured on it the same way.

"This killing was done in the summer, and the next

spring, when the men were coming in from their trapping they camped somewheres near here in the hills, and stopped two or three days. Before they started on into the Fort, one of the men who was out hunting saw a camp of Indians coming—a small party—and he watched 'em until they camped, and then crawled up close to the lodges. After he'd watched them awhile, he made out that they were 'Rapahoes, and he took the news to camp. The men there turned out, and during the night they got all around the Indians and cached on the hillside among the cedars and rocks. You can think how it must have been that night, the lodges all standing here white in the darkness, and the men lying hid on the hillside waiting for day. At last it began to grow grey in the east, and then light, and pretty soon a smoke began to come from one lodge and then from another, and then a man stepped out, or a woman started down to the creek to get water, or a boy to bring in the horses, and then the first shot came and the people began to run out, and to run this away and that away, but as fast as they came out they were shot down. After all the people were killed, they killed the dogs and horses; everything that there was alive, and then they went away. They never went down into the camp."

He paused to relight his pipe, and Jack said: "But how did they know that these were the people who killed the emigrants?"

"They didn't," said Hugh, "but they knew that

they were 'Rapahoes. That's the way it used to be in them days ; if a Piegan or a Sioux, or a Cheyenne killed a white man, his friends killed the next Indian they met of the tribe that had done the killing. The Indians did the same, and many a man has been killed in revenge for something that he had never heard of."

"That seems very unfair," said Jack, "I never heard of anything like it before."

"Well, it don't seem just right ; that's so," said Hugh, "but anyhow, that's the way it used to be in old times. Come on now. Let's go down to where the camp stood."

They rode down to the little flat and stopped their horses in the middle of this old camp-ground. Hugh pointed to several spots where there were a few broken, bent and weathered sticks, and said : "You see, the lodges stood wherever you see those lodge poles. If you look in the middle of each of those circles you will find the old ashes of the fire and the stones that were around it. See here!" Dismounting, he walked to one of the circles and picked up two or three pieces of charred wood, which he held up. "That fire once cooked a man's dinner, and look here!" he added, stooping down and feeling in the dirt for something which he released with a hard pull "Here's a knife, a regular old-fashioned bowie-knife ; what we used to call an Arkansas toothpick." He knocked the heavy blade against a stone, to free it from the dirt which clung to it, and passed it to Jack.

"Why, what a big knife," said Jack. "It's almost like a sword; but it isn't very sharp."

"Not very," said Hugh, "but notice how it's whetted, round on one side and flat on the other. That's the way Indians always whet their knives. Queer, isn't it? Let's look around for something more. Let your horse go, after you've thrown down the reins; he won't move." The two separated and began to look over the ground, and in a moment Jack called out in a solemn way. "Oh, Hugh, look here; see what I have found!" and as the old man came up to him, he pointed out a human skull that lay half buried in the dirt in a little washout. "That's one of 'em," said Hugh, as he picked it up. It was very old, grey with weather, and all the teeth had fallen out. Higher up the hill were splinters of bones and even some whole bones of legs and arms, and sticking out of the ground among them was a long piece of iron, which when dragged from its resting-place, proved to be a rifle barrel.

"Well, now," remarked Hugh, "if we keep this up we'll have a horse-load of truck to pack home with us."

They looked further, gathering up one thing after another, and at length when they were ready to go home they had five Indian skulls, the rifle barrel, the knife, an old-fashioned T. Gray axe, such as was used in trade with the Indians in early days, some pieces of the wood of saddles, a couple of elk-horn fleshers and a stone scraper. All these things were

very old ; the iron deeply rusted, the bones and wood grey and split with age and weather.

Hugh bundled these things into his coat and tied it on behind his saddle, and they set out for the ranch. Just as they got to the corral, the dinner horn sounded, and after unsaddling and putting their treasures upon the roof, which Hugh easily reached from the ground, they went to the house. Jack thought that he had never tasted a dinner quite as good as that one, and when he had finished he felt quite uncomfortable.

A little while after dinner, Hugh said to Jack: " Now, son, go in and bring out your rifle, and let's see how it's sighted and how it pulls off. A man always must learn how his gun shoots before he can expect to kill anything. I've seen young fellows from the States come out to hunt, and start in and shoot away a heap of ammunition without hitting anything, and come to find out, they had never sighted their guns, and didn't know anything about where they shot. 'Course they couldn't hit anything. You get a box of ca'tridges and your gun, and we'll try to find out just what it can do, and afterwards what you can do."

When the gun was in his hands he explained its working to his hearer, and then took it apart, put it together again, and told Jack to do this, correcting his mistakes and telling him a good deal about guns in general and this gun in particular. Then he proposed to go out on the prairie to shoot at a mark, and told Jack to carry his gun and to hold it

so it would not point at any one. "I'm always scary about a gun," he said, "and the older I get the more afraid of 'em I am. I've seen a heap of accidents in my time from guns, and once, when I was young, I came near killing my best friend, just by foolishness. So I like to see everybody as careful of a gun as he knows how to be. You've been told, I expect, never to point your gun at anything except what you mean to shoot at. This business of sighting your gun at people and animals, and saying to yourself, 'Oh, couldn't I just hit that,' is just baby play, and I don't think there's any need to tell you not to do that. There's another thing. Don't carry a ca'tridge in your gun unless you're expecting game to jump up in front of you any time. Don't carry your gun loaded on your horse. Something may happen. You may kill the man you're riding with, or his horse, or your own horse. In old times we had to carry our guns loaded, but since we've got these britch-loaders it ain't needful. I expect you'd feel mighty mean if you killed a man, just by your carelessness, or if he killed you the same way. I came mighty near getting killed that way once by an Indian I was travelling with. We sat down side by side on top of a high hill to look over the country, and he had his rifle across his knees with the muzzle pointing toward me, and he was playing with the hammer of his gun, raising and lowering it. I didn't like it very much, and got up and walked away, thinking I'd come back and sit down on the other side of him. In less than a minute after I

moved, his gun went off, and if I had been sitting there the ball would have gone through me. I was scared some when I thought how near I'd come to being bored through, but I wasn't a patch on the Indian. He was scared grey. You see it was known that he and I were together, and if he had killed me by accident, it would have been hard for him to prove it, and he'd likely have got killed for murdering me.

"We'll try the gun at that hill over there. Do you see that white rock, the small one to the left of that sage bush? That's about a hundred yards away. Load your gun and shoot at that. First sight at the rock. See that the top of the foresight just shows over the notch of the hind sight. Hold the gun tight to your shoulder and pull the trigger slowly. Try to hold your gun steady on the mark, and when the sight is on it, pull. Don't load it yet."

Jack had been listening carefully and trying to remember all that Hugh had said to him, and now he raised the rifle to his shoulder and sighted at the stone. He was surprised to see how large it looked through the sights of the rifle, and how it seemed to jump about. He could not hold the gun steady, and at last took it down, saying, "I can't hold it still."

"Try it a few times, and then you can fire a shot. Put your gun up and, as soon as the foresight is on the mark, pull." Jack did this two or three times, and the last time said, "That time I think I would

have hit it." "Good," said Hugh. "Now put a ca'tridge in the gun and shoot. Remember, you must keep the butt of your gun pressed close to your shoulder. If you don't do that, the gun will kick your shoulder and hurt. I don't want that to happen, it might spoil your shooting." Jack put a cartridge in the gun, closed the breech, and partly raised the gun to his shoulder.

"Haven't you forgot something?" said Hugh.

"I don't know; what?" answered Jack.

"We most generally cock our guns before we shoot," said Hugh, drily. A little ashamed, Jack cocked his gun, aimed and fired. At the report he was pushed back a little, but he was made glad by seeing a little puff of dust rise from the ground somewhere near the stone.

"That was a right good shot," said Hugh earnestly. "If you can do as well as that every time, we'll be sending you out to get meat for the ranch pretty soon. The ball struck the ground only two or three inches to the left of the rock. That shot would have killed an antelope if you'd aimed at his heart. Try another, and let's see if you can do it again."

The second shot was not quite so good, and when Jack took down the gun he said to Hugh: "It kicked harder that time."

"Not so," was the reply, "you forgot to hold the butt close to your shoulder, as I told you to. You must always do that. After a little, you will do it without thinking about it. Now let me fire two or

three shots. I want to see how the sights are myself."

He fired several shots, the first two striking a little above the mark, the third just below it, while the fourth did not knock up any dust, but seemed to jar the stone, and was followed by a curious screaming sound, loud at first, and quickly dying away. "That was the ball singing," said he, in answer to Jack's question. "The lead hit the rock and glanced off and went sailing away over the prairie. You must just see the tip of the foresight on the mark. Draw it fine. If you pull the trigger when it's there, you will hit every time.

An hour more was spent in shooting at this mark, and before it was over, Jack had come to understand a great deal about his gun, and had received much praise from his teacher. "You're doing well, my son, and it won't take you long to learn how to shoot. If you pick up riding, roping and packing as easily as you do shooting, your uncle will be hiring you to work for wages before snow flies. Now let's go up to the house and wipe out the gun."

After Hugh had shown Jack how to clean his rifle, and had explained to him the importance of keeping it clean, free from rust and sand, and always ready for use under all circumstances, he said, "Of course, in these days we don't have to look out for enemies like we used to in old times. Nowadays the wars are pretty much over in these parts, yet of course there's plenty of places where the Indians are bad yet, and nobody knows when they'll make

trouble anywhere. Why, nobody will ever know how many people got killed there when they were building the railroad back on the plains. I scouted from Julesburg west to Cheyenne at that time, and it was an everyday matter to find two or three graders stuck full of arrows along the track. That was the time when the Pawnee scouts were guarding the road, and it was fun to see them fellows get out when there was an alarm and chase the hostiles. Them Pawnees just loved a fight, and they had never been whipped when Major North was leading them, so they did not know what fear was. They'd turn out at any time of the day or night and chase the Sioux and Cheyennes as long as their horses could run. It was a picnic for them.

"I had some good friends in that camp. One fellow, especially, that they called Itching Buffalo, was brave, and he had powerful medicine. They said he had been down into one of them houses where the medicine animals have their councils. The others used to say that he couldn't be killed, and it's sure that he was always in the front of the fighting and never got hit. There's surely something queer about Indian medicine. Take old Whirlwind, the Cheyenne, in that fight he had with the Sacs. Every feather was cut from his war bonnet, but not a bullet hit him, nor his medicine that he carried on it.

"But I'm forgetting that you don't know anything about these things. It's likely you will though, if you and I are much together. What I started to

say was this. In old times a man's life often depended on his having his gun ready for use. If he went out for his horse, picketed close to camp, or went for wood, or down to the creek for water, he carried his gun with him, and it was always in good order and ready for use. It isn't that way here or now, but it may be so yet. So you'd better learn to keep your gun clean, and to have it with you always. It ain't much trouble to learn this, and it may save your life sometime.

"Well, there comes the men with a bunch of horses. Let's go down to the corral and look 'em over."

CHAPTER VII

HUGH CHASED BY INDIANS

JACK'S first long ride had made him pretty sore ; all his muscles pained him. Hugh said he must keep riding and soon he would be all right.

For several days after this, Hugh and Jack rode together, and each day they went a little further and in a new direction. Each day Jack found riding easier, and before long he felt perfectly at home on Old Grey. Each day after they got home from the ride, they took the rifle down on the flat in front of the house and fired a number of shots at the white rock, and several times Jack hit it, and all his shots were good ones, and the bullets struck close to the mark. Hugh was pleased with the boy's steadiness and told him that before long they would go out and take a hunt.

Besides the rifle-shooting Jack was learning something about horses and how to use them. Now, when he went into the corral with Hugh, he no longer felt afraid that the horses would run over him. The day after their first ride, Hugh and Jack led Old Grey up to a big section of a cottonwood log that Mrs. Carter used in mounting her horse,

and, standing on this, Jack saddled and bridled the grey. Hugh showed him how to do it, and then stood by and watched, and when Jack did anything wrong, he corrected him, and helped him change it. After two or three days Jack understood how to saddle up so well that Hugh no longer watched him.

One day Jack had his first lesson in roping—what he had always read of as lassoing. Hugh called the rope a lassrope, or a reata—this being a Spanish word meaning rope. The two took a rope and went into the big corral, and for a time practised throwing at the snubbing post, which stood in its centre. Hugh showed Jack just how it was done, and after he had thrown the rope two or three times he handed it to Jack, and told him to coil it and to throw it. In two or three days Jack found that he could catch the post about half the time, and that throwing the rope, which at first had seemed to him such hard work, was very easy. Several times he caught Old Grey in the corral. After he had come to understand as much as this, Hugh had him practise on horseback, showing him how to throw from the saddle, and how to fasten his rope by two or three turns about the horn, so as to hold anything that he might catch with the noose. He warned him how to handle his rope in taking the turns around the horn, with the thumb and finger held up, not down, so that he should not get them caught under the rope, for many men have lost their fingers in this way, having them cut off between the rope

and the horn when the pull came in throwing a steer. So it was that as they rode along, Jack would throw the rope at one sage-bush after another, pulling up those which he caught and then gathering the rope for a fresh throw. This was pretty good fun, and when he grew tired of it, he would coil up his rope and hang it on his saddle by the loop that was fastened there to hold it, and then he and Hugh would talk about the things they saw, and those that Hugh had seen and heard in his long life on the prairie.

The whole of each day was passed in the open air ; and this life, so different from that led by the boy in his city home, soon began to affect his health and his spirits. His appetite increased enormously, his flesh began to harden, and his face, under exposure to the keen cool wind and the unshadowed rays of the sun, to take on a hue of brown that it had never shown before. Each night he was heartily and healthily tired, and an hour or two after supper he went to bed, where he slept like a log until called next morning. Each day began with the sun and was enjoyed through every hour. As he became accustomed to his horse, Hugh taught him to mount from the right side, as the Indians do, and urged him to learn to ride bareback, telling him of the skill shown by the Indians in their war and hunting trips, when they use no saddle, but cling to the naked horse.

After he had been a week at the ranch, his uncle told Jack that he was going to send in to the rail-

road, and advised him to write to his mother, and to tell her that it might be a month or more before she would again hear from him, and the boy did so, sending a long and enthusiastic account of the place and the people. Mr. Sturgis also wrote to his sister and brother-in-law, telling what Jack's life had been up to that time, of the marked interest felt by the boy in all that he saw and did, and of his changed appearance and improved health. These letters made two people in the distant city very happy.

One afternoon, after they had been practising with the rifle, and had cleaned and put it away, Hugh said to Jack, "Now, son, to-morrow, unless your uncle wants me to do something else, we'll ride over toward Sand Creek and see if we can't kill something. Mrs. Carter says we're about out of meat, and she wants me to kill an antelope. Let me see that butcher knife of yours that I took off your belt the other day. If it's a new one it'll need grinding, of course."

Jack ran and brought the knife, and Hugh looked at it and tried its edge on his thumb. "Yes," said he, "it's just out of the shop and we'll have to put an edge on it. No telling till I get it on the stone what sort of a piece of steel it is. Come on and turn for me and I'll find out."

They went down to the blacksmith's shop, and while Jack turned the handle of the grindstone, Hugh ground the knife and afterwards whetted it on the oil-stone until its edge was keen. "'Pears to me," he said, "that this is a pretty good knife.

I expect your uncle bought it for you! Most young fellows that come out here carry a dirk knife with a big bone handle and a guard, that ain't no earthly use except in a fight, and they don't expect to fight; they expect to use the knife to butcher with. What you want is just a common skinning knife, such as a butcher uses—what you've got here. Now put it back in your sheath, and if we have any luck to-morrow, you'll have a chance to try it."

When they had left the shop and walked up to the house, and Hugh had seated himself on the ground in the sun, and Jack had thrown himself down beside him, the boy said: "Hugh, you spoke the other day about the Pawnees, and said you had seen them and had some friends among them. I wish you'd tell me about them. I've read about them in Cooper's novels. Don't you remember that Leather Stocking when he got very old lived among the Pawnees, and had the young chief Hard Heart, for his son. He must have been a splendid man. I remember the description of the fight, when he killed the Dakota chief. It was fine."

"Well," said Hugh, "I never knew any of them people; likely they were before my time, but the story you read was likely true, for them Pawnees has surely killed plenty Sioux. I expect there's nothing a Pawnee likes better than to get at the Sioux. I have seen quite a few Pawnees in my time, and I've stopped some in their villages, and they're good people, no mistake about that. They are kind, and they give you the best they've got;

and they're brave. I don't want to be with better people. Some of 'em helped me out of a bad fix once, and I ain't never forgot it. That's the time I saw the prettiest horse I ever looked at. It was while I was scouting up at the end of the track that I saw him. He belonged to an Indian,—Sioux or Cheyenne, I expect—anyhow they were hostiles, and they chased me, and if I had had far to go, I expect they'd have caught me. They might have done so anyhow if it hadn't been for them Pawnees.

“I had gone out from the graders' camp to see if I couldn't get an antelope, for the camp was clean out of fresh meat. I rode up out of the valley, and along on the high prairie, back from the creek, but not too far back, for I expected likely I'd get jumped, and I wanted to have a good show to make a run for it. There hadn't been no Indians seen for quite a while, and the boys working on the track were getting pretty bold. One of them even wanted to go hunting with me. He didn't have no horse to ride, said he would go afoot, that he could keep up, if I didn't ride too fast. I told him he had better stop in camp if he wanted to keep his hair safe, and, anyhow, he couldn't go with me. I knew that because Indians hadn't been seen, that didn't signify there weren't none in the country. The more you don't see them fellows—when you're in a hostile country—the harder you've got to look out for 'em. And there was a company, or part of a company, of Major North's Pawnees camped about ten or fifteen miles further up the creek, and I

expected that the Sioux, if there was any about, would cut in behind the Pawnees, and likely tackle the graders' camp, if they saw any show to get away with it. Well, I hadn't gone more'n a couple of miles or so before I came over a little rise, and saw a buck antelope feeding, in easy shot. I killed him and tied him to the saddle, and started back to camp; but I hadn't gone far when I saw three Indians come in sight, right between me and the camp. They saw me as soon as I did them, and as soon as they saw me, they charged. They were quite a ways off, maybe a mile or more; but that did not give me much time to fool away. I cut loose the meat from my saddle, and started for the bluffs, thinking I'd get down into the creek valley, and either head them and get to camp, or else ride for the Pawnee camp. When I got to the bluffs, looking all the time for a place to get down, by George! I couldn't see one; it was so steep, even in the best place, that you couldn't get no horse down, without he had wings. Of course a man could have clumb down afoot, but not a horse. Well, the Indians were a-coming all the time, and one of 'em was nigh a half mile ahead of the other two; those two had not gained much, but the fellow in the lead, he was surely a-coming. While I was looking for a place to get down I'd noticed a little point running out into the valley, with three pines on it, and I made for them, for I says to myself, 'I ain't a-going to let them fellows have this horse, and then get killed afoot.'

"I got to the trees and stopped and got off. The lead Indian kept a-coming; and, sir, he surely had a good horse. It was a big iron-grey, powerful and swift, I could tell by the way he overhauled my horse, for mine wan't no slouch, and I hadn't let him linger much by the way. Why, when that grey's foot struck the ground it seemed like he was galloping on cushions, it was so easy. The Indian came up to within about four hundred yards of the trees, and then he wheeled his horse and rode off in a wide circle and met his party, and they stopped and talked a while, and then they started and charged straight at me. They did not worry me much, for I knew they wouldn't come right close, and they couldn't get around me. If they'd been able to circle in behind me, I expect they'd have bothered me considerable. As it was, I kept watching that grey horse, and thinking about him, and figuring to see if there wasn't some way I could get hold of him; but I did not see any. The Indians kept a-charging up and a-charging up, every time coming a little closer. One of them had a gun, and every time they turned off, he would shoot toward me; but they were too far off to hit anything. You see, in them days, britch-loaders weren't very common anywhere, and the Indians, of course, knew less about 'em than white people. They calculated on my having a muzzle-loader, and were trying to tempt me to shoot, so as to make a charge when my gun was empty, and finish me before I could load. I had a little britch-loading Sharp's rifle, with paper

cartridges, but I could load pretty fast if I had to. I could beat a muzzle-loader all to death.

“At last the Indians came up so close that I made up my mind I would give them a shot, and I thought I would try the man riding the grey, just on the chance that if I killed him, the grey might keep on towards my horse and I would get a chance to catch him. I stood up against the tree and took a careful aim at the man, shooting plenty high, for they were a long shot off. Just as I pulled though, the man I was shooting at swung his horse, and my ball went by him and killed the horse of the man behind him. It fell, and the rider jumped up and ran off, jumping from side to side, like he was plenty scared I would shoot at him. They all stopped away out of range and began to talk again, when, all of a sudden, I saw six more men ride up in sight, quite a long way off. Thinks I to myself, ‘If these is more Sioux, I am surely in for it now;’ but in a moment I noticed that these six men were coming in pairs, the way soldiers ride, and then I knew it was a bunch of Pawnees. I ran to untie my horse and charge out, but the Sioux had seen the Pawnees as soon as I did, and they had just everlastingly lit out over the prairie. The Pawnees struck out after the Sioux, and by the time I was in the saddle and riding, they were a couple of miles ahead of me, and going hard. I knew it was no use for me to run my horse down trying to catch them, so I rode out to where I had dropped my meat, picked it up, and went back to the graders’ camp.

“The next day I went up to the Pawnee camp, for I kept thinking about that grey horse, and if the Pawnees had captured him, I wanted to buy him. I knew that they would understand just as well as I did how good a horse he was, and I thought likely that if they had got him, they would not sell him; but I was going to make a bluff at buying him, anyhow. When I got to the camp I talked a while with Major North’s brother, who was in command there, and at last told him about the chase that they had had yesterday, and how the Sioux had had me cornered. I said I wanted to see one of the Indians that was in the fight. When the head man of these six came to the tent, I saw that it was old Ikūts tárūsh, and I talked with him about the chase, and asked him what they had done. He said that they had killed two of the Sioux. Then I asked him about the grey horse, and whether they had got it. He shook his head. ‘No,’ he said, ‘that horse got killed. The horse and the two men who were riding him were both killed, and the other man and his horse got away.’ I don’t know when I’ve been more sorry about the death of any dumb beast, that wasn’t a dog, than I was that time. Ikūts tárūsh was sorry too.”

CHAPTER VIII

JACK'S FIRST ANTELOPE

AFTER breakfast next morning, Hugh and Jack saddled their horses and set out for Sand Creek. Before they started, Hugh brought out from the house a gun sling which he fastened to Jack's saddle on the left side. It was like a long narrow leather bag open at both ends, and held by two long straps, one of which passed over the horn of the saddle, while the other was tied behind the cantle, so that the bag lay along the horse's side under the left hand stirrup leather, and just below where the rider's knee would come. Then he slipped the rifle in, so that the stock lay along the horse's shoulder and within easy reach of the hand. This, he told Jack, was the best way to carry his rifle, and although at first the gun seemed in Jack's way, and a little uncomfortable, he soon got used to feeling it there.

The day was bright and pleasant, and skirting the base of the mountain for two or three miles, they rode over the ridge which separates the waters of Sand Creek from the Muddy. The prairie was everywhere the same dull brown; a few cattle and

horses were seen feeding on the distant hillsides. Far away toward the Sand Creek, Hugh pointed out a number of white dots on the prairie, which he told Jack were antelope. He said to him :

"Now, son, when we get near those antelope, who is going to do the hunting, you or me?"

"Why, I don't know, Hugh. I've been wondering about that. You know what it is best to do, and if you will tell me, I'll try to do just as you say."

"That's good, son," said Hugh, "I want you to kill the meat, if we get any, but it's a heap better for you to start in right to learn how to hunt than it is for you to kill anything. I guess the best way is for me to do the hunting for a little while, so that you can watch me and learn. Now, I'll tell you two or three things about hunting that it's worth while for you to remember. When you're hunting, always go alone if you can, or else with one other man, if you and he understand each other. You'll never have any luck if you hunt with a man who is always crazy to be ahead. If he acts that way, you just quit him and don't go with him again. Such a man will everlastingly scare away the game, and he'll wear out your patience, and make you wish he was somewhere else a good many times before you get to camp. If you're alone you'll have yourself to blame for any blunders you make, and it's easy for you to forgive yourself for the fool things you do, but it ain't easy to forgive any one else. If you're hunting with a man who understands how to hunt

better'n you do, let him do the hunting, and, if he wants it bad, let him do the shooting too. But I wouldn't hunt with a man that makes a hog of himself, if I was you.

"If you're hunting with another man, always have it understood who is to hunt and who is to shoot. Don't ever hunt side by side with any one. Two men are twice as easy seen as one, and make twice as much noise ; so they are more likely to be noticed by the game. You can bet that the game is always on the watch, and, do the best you can, it is pretty likely to see you. So you want to go slow, and to be just as careful as you know how. When you get to the top of the hill, go mighty slow. Only take a step or two at a time, and look over every inch of the ground that you can see beyond you, as your head rises. Always take your hat off. A hat sticks up two or three inches higher than your eyes, and can be seen before you can see whatever it is that's looking at you. In the same way you'll see the horns of an elk or an antelope that's over the ridge from you before you see his head.

"When you see any game, don't dodge down quick, so's to get out of sight. Even if the animal seems to be looking right at you, don't move, or, if you do, lower your head very slowly. The chances are that the animal hasn't seen you, or if it has, that it don't know what you are, and if you keep still, it won't notice you. Likely after staring at you for a minute or two, it'll look some other way, or put down its head to take a bite of grass. Then

you must drop down out of sight and begin to crawl to the top of the hill. You must remember that when you see this head, there's the whole crest of the hill between your shoulder, from which you must shoot, and the antelope's heart that you must shoot at. You've got to see the antelope's whole body before you can shoot, and you've got to get up to the top of the hill before you can see his whole body. While you are getting to the top of the hill, you must watch out and not show yourself, either to the animal you have seen, or to any others that there are with it. Likely as not there will be six or eight others in the bunch, scattered about on the hillside, and all of 'em keeping a good look-out. To get a standing shot, you must keep out of sight of all of 'em. For a part of the way to the top of the hill you can go stooping down low, then you'll have to get down on your hands and knees and creep, and at last you'll have to drop flat on your belly and crawl. If the grass is any way thick and high, you won't have much trouble, but if it's short and thin, maybe the antelope will see you and run off.

"Remember to keep your head down, and don't feel that you've got to look every two or three minutes to see whether the game is there or not, It won't run without it gets scared, and if it starts to run, your looking won't stop it. When, by crawling as carefully as you know how, you've got up so you can see your animal again, wait until it puts its head down to feed, or looks away from you, and then raise your head a little bit to see if

there are any others with it, so as to get an idea of the general situation. When you raise your head, if you can see the whole body of your antelope, you had better shoot. If the animal is broadside toward you, shoot at his heart ; if head toward you, at the point of his breast ; if tail toward you, shoot between the hams, about three inches below the tail ; if quartering to you, at the point of the shoulder, or, if quartering from you, at the flank, just in front of the ham. You want your bullet to go through the heart, and you must remember that the heart lies just back of the fore legs, and low down. The life lies low. Don't forget that. There is a little curl of hair on an antelope just back of the elbow, and here the hair is thin, and the dark skin shows through and makes this curl look black. That is the mark I always shoot at, if I can. An antelope hit there don't go far.

"Now, it ain't much use for me to tell you all these things, because you've got to see 'em done and to do 'em yourself before you can know much about hunting, but maybe what I've told you will make it easier for you to learn.

"There's one thing I ain't told you about, because I suppose you know all about it without being told. That's the wind. All animals are terrible keen smellers, and of course you can't never get up to them from the windward side. You've always got to go to leeward. Let the wind blow from them to you, not from you to them."

"I think I understand all that you've told me,"

said Jack, "and I'll try to remember it. Do you think we'll get any game to-day?"

"Oh, we'll sure see some antelope," answered Hugh, "but maybe we won't find what we want in a good place. You see, the does are going to have young ones pretty soon now, and so I don't like to kill 'em. The bucks are in better order, and if we can find one of them in a place where we can get at him, we'll try to kill him."

As they rode on farther and farther, the country became more broken, and they passed over one little ridge after another, with little valleys between. They had almost reached the top of one of these ridges, when Hugh suddenly stopped and looked intently toward the right, where the valley widened out a little. Jack stopped and looked too, but he could see nothing except the brown prairie.

"See 'em?" said Hugh, after a moment.

"No, I don't see anything," replied Jack.

"Look down on the hillside, just above that little alkali lake," said Hugh. "There's two antelope there—old does, I reckon. We won't bother with them. Likely they'll get our wind after we've gone a little further, and run up by us."

"Oh, yes, I see them now," said Jack. They crossed the next valley and rode up over the ridge beyond, and as they went down that hill, Hugh called out, "Here they come, sure enough;" and looking to his right, Jack saw two antelope running towards them very fast. They ran smoothly and evenly, and as easily and fast up hill as down, or

on the level. In a moment they were passing quite close in front of the riders, and had run up the hill and disappeared over its crest.

"We've got to watch out now," said Hugh. "We're liable to run on an antelope any minute. Don't ride up over these hills in a hurry, and keep a good look-out."

The next hill they came to, Hugh checked his horse before he got to the top, and looked carefully over the ground ahead. After doing this, he lifted his bridle rein and let his horse take a few steps forward, and then stopped again and looked. Then he went forward again—quite to the top of the hill, and looked again. Nothing was seen, and they went on down into the valley and across it. Jack noticed that as he went up the hill old Baldy seemed to be looking just as his rider was. His ears were pricked up; he moved slowly and carefully and seemed to be expecting something all the time. Each time they came to the crest of a hill the same thing was repeated, but nothing was seen. At length, however, after one of the looks, Hugh bent low over his horse's neck, and at the same time turned him round and rode down the hill again. Jack, who had kept close to Hugh's side, had seen nothing, for his head was a foot or two below the old man's.

After they had got part way down the hill, Hugh spoke in a low tone and said, "There's a couple of antelope on the side hill just above here. They're lying down, and I guess we can get up within shot

Throw down your rope and take your gun and come on."

In a moment Jack was off his horse, and had thrown down his bridle rein and his rope. Then he pulled his rifle out of its case and went to Hugh, who had taken his rifle from its case and stood waiting for him. Jack was beginning to feel excited, and his heart was pounding against his ribs, and as he ran up to Hugh, he was not looking where he was going, and he caught his foot in a sage-bush, and would have fallen flat if Hugh had not reached out his hand and caught him by the shoulder.

"Steady, son: steady," said Hugh. "Don't be in such a rush. There's plenty of time, and if you're going to do any hunting you mustn't go ramming around this way. Go slow and easy. Those antelope ain't going to run away unless we've scared 'em already, and if we've scared 'em, they're out of shot by this time."

"Let's hurry, Hugh, and maybe we can get a shot at them."

"Easy, easy. Don't I tell you that you can't make anything by rushing 'round. I want you to learn how to hunt, not to act like a rattlehead. Now come with me and go slow and quiet, and we'll take a look."

The two walked forward toward the mountain for a hundred yards or so, Jack eagerly pressing forward, while Hugh walked slowly. The wind was now blowing in their faces. At length Hugh pointed off to their right and ahead, and said to Jack, "Now.

those antelope are over the ridge there, lying down on the hillside. Do you want me to go up and find 'em, and then come back and get you, so's you can shoot at 'em, or would you rather go up yourself and find 'em, and take the shot? You can do just whichever you like."

"Oh, may I go up alone and do it all myself? That'll be splendid. I'd rather do that than have any help," said Jack, "Can I start now?"

"Yes," said Hugh. "Go ahead, but mind and be careful, or else the first thing you know you'll see them antelope a long way off. I'll set here and smoke till I hear the shot." As he said this, Hugh sat down on the ground, and putting his rifle beside him, felt in his pocket for his pipe, while Jack went on towards the hilltop. He walked very fast, keeping his eyes fixed on the crest of the hill before him, and before he had come to the top of the ridge he was breathing pretty fast. As he got nearer to the top, he began to be still more excited. He remembered what Hugh had said about shooting at a particular spot on the antelope, and he hoped he could hit it. If he did, he felt sure that the antelope would drop. It would be great to take the animal in and be able to say that he had killed it, and not Hugh. Suddenly, as he was thinking of these things, he heard a queer noise off to his left, and then he saw that he was on top of the hill and could see over quite a good deal of the valley in front of him. He thought that the antelope must be somewhere near here. He began to look, very carefully, when

suddenly he again heard this curious noise, something like a person blowing his nose, and looking hard in the direction of the sound, he suddenly saw two buck antelope running away from him not very far off. They disappeared over a hill, and in a moment were seen again much further off, running up a high hill, on top of which they stopped and stood looking at him, again making that curious sound. He felt sure that they were the antelope he had been looking for, and he was so disappointed that he felt like crying, only that would do no good. They were now much too far away to shoot at. He watched them for a little while, and then began to walk along the hilltop to make sure that there were no more antelope there. He soon convinced himself of this, and then turned to go back to Hugh. Before he had gone far, he saw him coming, riding his own horse and leading the grey.

"Well," said Hugh, "I saw the antelope run off, and so I brought the horses. What scared them?"

"I don't know, Hugh," was the answer, "but I guess I did. I got up on the hill and was looking around, and suddenly I heard some queer noises off there, and then I heard them again, and then two antelope ran over the hill and up on the mountain there, and stopped and looked."

"Well," said Hugh, "I expect you must have let 'em see you. You've got to be mighty careful when you're crawling up on game."

Jack mounted his horse and rode off beside Hugh. For a little while he kept still, thinking, and strug-

gling with his disappointment ; then he spoke and said :

"Hugh, I tried to be smart just now, and so I lost those antelope. Because you have taught me how to do a few things, I thought I could creep up to those animals alone. I made a mistake and I know it now. Don't let me make any more like it, please."

Hugh's face lighted up with pleasure as he heard these words, and he answered, "Son, I'm mighty glad to hear you say this. You talk like a man, and you're going to make a good one, I know it. I figured quite a spell to-day before I made up my mind what I'd do about them antelope, but I was a little mite afraid you was getting the big-head, and I thought I'd try you the way I did. If you'd asked me to take you up to the antelope, you'd have got the shot, and likely now we'd have been butchering, but I expect it is better the way it is. You've learned a lesson of one kind, and before the day's over I'll give you a lesson in hunting. Come on, now, let's lope while we can."

They went on, galloping across the little valleys and going slowly up the hills. Before very long Jack again saw Hugh bend his head and back away from the ridge, and then turn and ride a few yards down the hill and dismount. Jack did the same, and as he drew his rifle from its scabbard, Hugh said to him, "There's a big buck just over the hill, and I think we can get him. Is your gun loaded?"

"No," replied Jack.

"That's right, but you'd better load it now and keep it at half-cock, and then follow me and do just what you see me do."

Hugh walked quietly up the hill and Jack followed him. Again he was excited, but this time he was not breathing fast, and now he felt sure that he would get a shot. When Hugh had nearly reached the top of the hill, he stopped, took off his hat and dropped it on the ground, and putting his hand behind him motioned Jack to stop. After a long look he took two or three steps forward and then stopped again; then two or three more, and then he slowly lowered his head and walked forward in a stooping position. Then he dropped to his knees, and turning, beckoned Jack, who had imitated all his motions, to his side. "The buck is just over there," he whispered, pointing to the crest before him. "Creep up beside me, and look through the grass and try to see him. Don't raise your head and don't hurry. There's plenty of time."

On hands and knees they crept forward a few feet, and then Hugh stretched out his hand and touched Jack, and motioned with his head. The boy stared at the grass before them which was shivering in the wind, but he could see nothing beyond it but the blue sky. At length Hugh bent toward him and whispered, "Don't you see his horns?" Instantly Jack saw that what he had seen several times and had supposed were two black looking weed stalks were the slender horns of an antelope. Hugh saw the change in his companion's face, and whispered

again, "Crawl up a few feet more and then get up slowly, rest your left elbow on your knee, and aim just behind the shoulder and low down." Jack crept up past Hugh, and, rising very slowly on one knee, took a careful aim. The buck was lying on a point of the hill, with his face toward the valley and his back toward Jack, who aimed at the side just behind the shoulder and low down, and fired. The buck sprang to his feet, and in half a dozen low, rabbit-like jumps, disappeared over the hill.

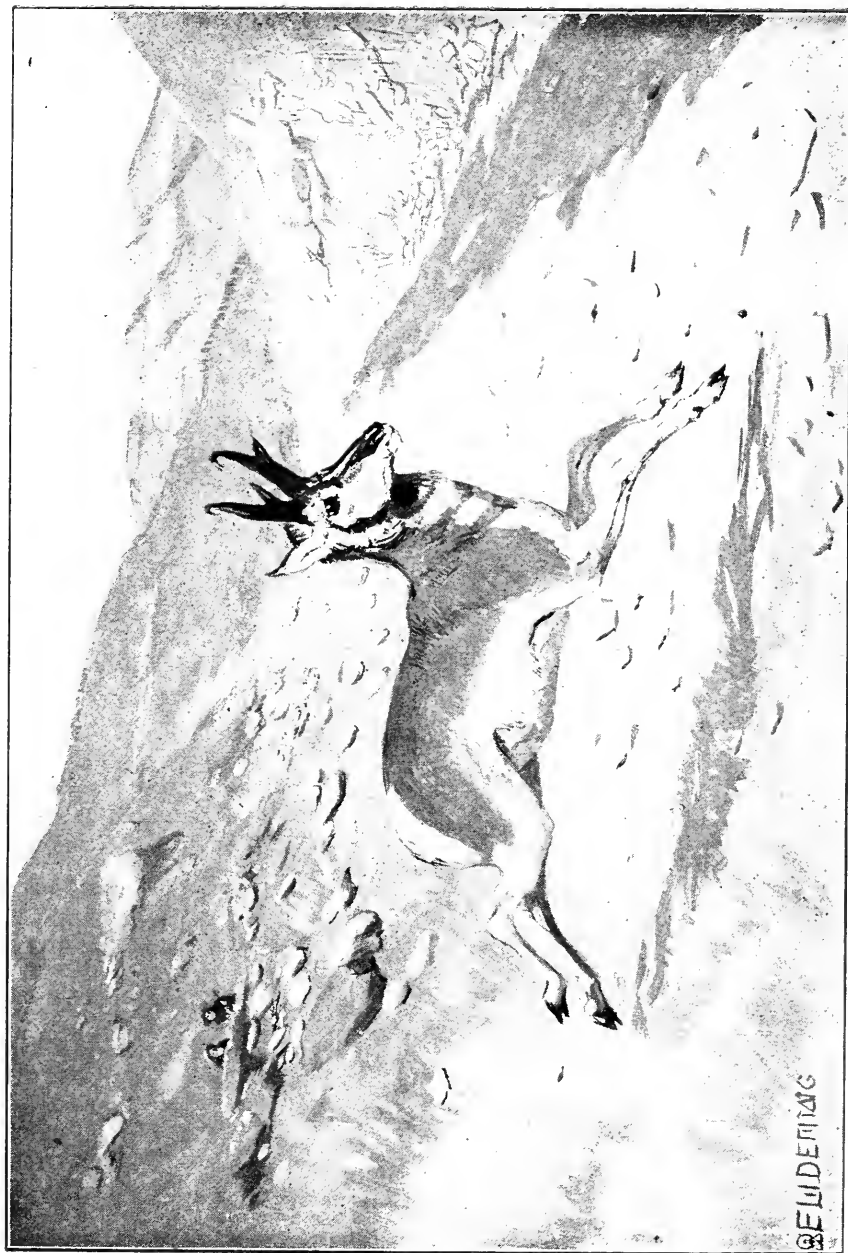
Jack had not had time to wonder whether he had missed or not, when he heard Hugh's voice at his ear saying, "Son, you done that well; no one could have done it better. Now, let's go and get the horses."

"Well, but Hugh, where is the antelope? Did I hit him or did I miss?" asked Jack.

"Why, you hit him, of course. Look where he ran. Don't you see that if you'd missed him he would have been in sight before now, either crossing that flat or running up on one of the hills. He ain't gone far. He's our meat."

"Oh, I hope so," gasped Jack, who suddenly began to tremble as if he were cold.

When they had mounted, Hugh led the way to the place where the antelope had been lying. Here he pointed out the hoof tracks and followed them down the hill. Before long he stopped, and pointing at the ground, said, "See there." Jack looked, and saw a dark splash on the ground, and clinging to a tuft of the brown prairie grass, several bright



"JACK CREEPT UP PAST HUGH...AND TOOK A CAREFUL AIM."—Page 84.

red drops. After a moment's hesitation, he exclaimed, "Oh, that's blood, isn't it? Then I must have hit him."

"Yes, indeed, he is hit. Now, you see if you can follow that blood trail. Don't keep looking at the ground just in front of you, look ahead of you and don't try to go too fast." Jack looked on the ground ahead of him, and saw other splashes, and starting on, soon saw that he could follow the marks much more easily and quickly in that way than he could by watching those which were close under his horse's head. They went on for a hundred yards further, and then, as they rounded the point of a little knoll, Hugh said, "There's your meat," and looking, Jack saw something white showing above the grass, and a moment later he was looking down on his first antelope.

It was a splendid big buck, and Jack, jumping off his horse, ran to it and for a moment could hardly believe his eyes. Then he tore off his hat and threw it up in the air and just yelled and hurrahed as loud as he could. Hugh meantime, smiling as if greatly pleased, had thrown down the ropes of both horses and twisted them around a sage-bush, and when he came up to the antelope, Jack was looking it all over, opening its mouth, stretching out its slender legs, and smoothing down its coarse rough hair.

"Isn't he pretty, though? And how slim his legs are! No wonder he can run. And he's got a black tongue, just like a pure breed Alderney cow. But he

must be pretty old, for he hasn't got any front teeth in his upper jaw. Do you think he'll be very tough? And see, he only has two hoofs on each foot. Are all antelopes that way? Some caribou that Uncle Will killed once in Canada had four hoofs on each foot, two little ones and two big ones. Oh, ain't I glad I didn't miss. But I never thought about missing. I just aimed as near as I could where you told me to. I'm so glad I didn't just wound him. Oh, this is the best day of my life." So Jack chattered on, until Hugh interrupted him by taking hold of the animal and turning it over, saying as he did so, "You done well, my son, mighty well. I watched you shoot and you couldn't have done better if you'd been killing antelope as long as I have. You were steady as a rock. Now, look a'here. You see this little hole? That's where the ball went in; and this big one is where it came out. You want to remember that; going in, the ball makes a small hole, coming out, a big one. You ask a heap of questions, but I'll try and answer some of 'em. You'll have to stop on the prairie longer than I have to find an antelope with front teeth in his upper jaw. They don't have 'em. No more does any other animal that I ever saw that chews the cud. First chance you get, look at a cow's mouth, or a deer's, or an elk's, or a sheep's. You'll see they're all alike in that. A horse has upper front teeth, and so does a hog, but those are about the only animals that eat grass that has 'em, in this country. Now, we've got to butcher. I'll do that,

because I know how, and after a while you can learn to. I guess we'll take this fellow in whole. You'd like to have 'em see him that way, I reckon."

Hugh rapidly prepared the animal for transportation to camp, and then, bringing up the horses and tightening the saddles on both, he lifted the antelope on Old Grey, and tied it on behind the saddle with the leather strings, tied its head up, so that the horns should not strike the horse, and the legs to each of the cinch rings of the saddle. Thus it was firm.

He looked at the sky for a moment, and then said, "Let's fill the pipe." Sitting down, he lit his pipe, and while he smoked said: "Antelope don't have no front teeth in the upper jaw, as I told you, and they don't have no dew-claws like a deer or a steer. I can't tell why they don't, but I can tell you what the Indians say about the dew-claws. Now a deer ain't got no gall, and this is the way the deer lost his gall and the antelope his dew-claws.

"A long time ago, they say, deer had galls and antelope had dew-claws. According to the Pawnees tell, in those days all the animals could talk to each other, and one day the antelope and the deer met out on the prairie. They had quite a talk, giving each other the news, and at last the deer got to bragging about himself, telling how smart he was and how he could beat all the other animals running. 'Why,' says the antelope, 'you may be a pretty considerable fast runner, but you couldn't beat me.' 'Bet you I can,' says the deer. 'Bet you ye can't,' says the antelope.

“ Well, they bantered each other for quite a spell, and at last they made it up that they'd run a race on the prairie, and they bet their galls on the race. Whoever won was to take both. Well, at last the day came for the race, and they ran, and the antelope beat the deer all hollow. So the deer handed over his gall to the antelope. He felt terrible bad, about it though, and seemed so broke up that the antelope felt sorry for him and made him a present of his dew-claws, to make his heart good.”

As he finished the story, Hugh knocked the fire out of his pipe and said, “ Well, let's be going.” They mounted and rode back toward the ranch. Jack's heart was full of gladness, and he felt proud of what he had done, and proud that Hugh praised him. As they rode by the stables and up to the house, one of the cowboys called out to Hugh, “ Why don't you carry your meat instead of making the kid pack it?” To which Hugh replied, winking at Jack, “ The kid killed it, and the kid's got to pack it.” Jack thought this a very good joke.

CHAPTER IX

JOHN MONROE, HALF-BREED

WHEN he looked out of the window next morning, Jack could see only a little way, for it was snowing and blowing very hard, and the fine snow-flakes filled the air and were whirled about in dense clouds. The brush and the mountain behind the house could not be seen, and even the stables and corrals were hidden.

After breakfast he sat for a little while by the window, looking out and watching the snow-flakes, but he soon got tired of that. His uncle was writing near the stove. There was no one to talk to, and he did not feel like reading. At length he thought that he would go down to the bunk-house where the men slept, and see what Hugh was doing. He could see the outline of the house amid the whirling snow, and supposed Hugh was there. He told his uncle what he was going to do, and Mr. Sturgis looked up and said, "All right, go down to the bunk-house, but go straight there, don't try to go anywhere else. It is easy to get lost in this snow."

When Jack entered the bunk-house, a great cloud

of snow blew in the open door after him, and as he banged it to behind him, he saw Hugh standing up plaiting a raw-hide rope, Reuben mending his saddle with strings of wet raw-hide, which he took from a bucket of water beside him, while Joe had his feet cocked up on the stove and was smoking and talking to the others. Jack went up to the stove and sat down on a box near Reuben, and watched him, and after a moment Joe went on speaking.

"I seen Red Cahill yesterday when I was riding. He was going down from Washakie to the Fort, and calculated he'd stop all night to Powell's. He told me that there's five head of our horses ranging up on Grey Bull. There's the old gotch-eared black mare, and her three-year old, two-year old, and yearling, and that yellow gelding that the boss traded for with them emigrants when they came through here two years ago. You mind we ain't seen that gelding since his feet got well, and I always thought he'd took the trail back the way he come. But it seems not. I don't expect the round-up will fetch them horses in, but it may. Anyhow we can go and get 'em 'most any time, only it's a long way to ride for five head of horses.

"Did Red say anything about the Indians at Washakie?" asked Hugh.

"That's what he did," said Joe.

"He said we won't see no Indians down here this summer. You know them Arapahoes that's up there to Washakie is kinder friends to them Chey-

ennes that broke out last fall down in Kansas, and got took in to Roberson, and then broke jail there, and most all got killed. He says there's some Cheyennes staying up there with the Arapahoes and they're all stirred up and uneasy over that killing down to Roberson."

"Yes," said Hugh, "and I don't wonder at it. It was a doggoned shame the way they treated them Indians. It was all right to capture them and bring 'em in and shut 'em up. That's war all right enough. But after they'd got 'em locked up, to shut down on their grub and their water was about the worst thing that I ever heard of this Government doing, and it sure done some pretty bad things. I don't care so much for the men. It's men's business to get into trouble and to fight and get killed or to starve, but when I think of them women and young girls and little children not having anything to eat or drink for seven days I tell you it makes me mad. I expect if them folks back east who pretends to think so much about Indians could know about that, they'd raise quite a fuss. But they ain't never likely to hear of it.

"What was it, Hugh?" said Jack.

"Oh," said Hugh, "it was just a killing of Indians, like plenty of others that's happened out in this western country, only this time the soldiers took away all the guns the Indians had and didn't give them no food nor water for seven days and then they let 'em get out, and killed 'em as they run. I believe they killed sixty or seventy of them and all

but about twenty was women and little children, but I don't feel much like talking about it any more, so let's quit it."

Jack had never before heard Hugh speak as he spoke now; so sternly and sharply that Jack had nothing to say and sat silent on his box, watching the others work. At length Reuben ventured a remark and said:

"This here snow-storm'll do a heap of good to the meadows, and the way it's blowing now it orter pile some of these ravines full of snow, and make the water last a heap longer than it commonly does."

"Yes," said Hugh. "This is going to be a right good year, for feed, and this here storm won't do no harm. It ain't cold enough to hurt young calves and colts. It may make the coyotes a little hungry though, and if any one of you boys rides to-morrow, he'd better take some baits with him—I mean to put out some poison along the mountains myself."

"That's a good idee," said Joe; "I believe I'll go out and mix up some tallow now."

Joe took his feet down from the stove, yawned, stood up, and walked to the window and looked out. Suddenly he exclaimed, "Gosh!" and stepping out the door uttered a loud "Hallo-o-a." Jack ran to the window and looked out. For a moment the storm had lulled; the wind had stopped blowing, and the snow falling, and the boy saw, a few hundred yards away, on the crest of a hill, a snow-covered horseman, followed by two pack animals. Joe's shout had reached the rider, who

had stopped and was now looking toward the house. Then the wind again began to howl and the snow to fly, and in an instant the whole scene was blotted out.

Jack went outside and stood by Joe, who seemed to be listening. "What is it, Joe?" he said.

"Didn't you see the way that fellow was going? He was plum lost, heading straight for the mountains. If he's a pilgrim he'd a got tangled up in the ravines and likely froze to death. Don't talk now; listen." In a moment, the two were joined by Hugh and Rube, and all stood listening. Presently some one said, "There he comes," and a moment later, the little group of animals stopped in front of the bunk-house. The rider stiffly dismounted, and began to take off the packs from his horses. "Well, seh," he said, "my glad my get here."

Hugh stepped out into the snow to help unpack the stranger's horses, and when the snow-covered man saw him, he exclaimed in surprise, "Why, hallo, Hugh, h'ole man, my think you was dead long time."

"Why, I'm durned if it ain't old John Monroe," said Hugh. "Come in, come in and get dry; the boys'll tend to your horses. Well, well; how are you? Living up north, yet? How's the old man? Tell me all the news."

"Well, seh," said old John, "this very curieuse. My comin' down here pour veeseet my girl. She married one man, live on Bear River. Now my goin' down there, meet h'ole Hugh. Bien curieuse,"

and he stared at Hugh as if he could hardly believe his eyes.

Hugh laughed. "Why, son," he said, speaking to Jack, "this old man and me has travelled together a good many years when I stopped up north with his people. You see, he's a Piegan half-breed, raised in Canada among the Crees and Frenchmen. His father came out into this country long before I was born, must have been more'n sixty-five years ago. The old man worked for the Hudson Bay Company in early days, and John here has been working for fur companies all his life. He's one of the best timber-hunters that ever was. I'm right glad to see him. We'll have to get him to stop with us here for a while, I expect."

A moment later Hugh turned to John and spoke to him in some strange language, and for a little while Jack sat there and watched the two talking and making signs to each other. He had heard his uncle tell of the sign language that the Indians used, and he felt sure that this must be it. When he left them to go up to the house the two men were still talking busily.

After dinner Jack again went down to the bunk-house. Hugh and John were still giving the news to each other, but now they spoke a language that Jack could understand—that is, Hugh did, but John's English made up only a small part of his speech, which was partly French and partly Indian, with a good many signs. Some parts of what he said Jack could not understand at all.

"Well, son," said Hugh after a while, "I have got a whole bag full of news from up north, and I'm mighty glad to have it. I've got a whole lot of friends in the Blackfoot camp, and I've got plenty of questions yet to ask the old man.

"Tell me, John, are the young men going to war much these days? In my time with the tribe the horse-stealing parties were out about all the time, except in the worst winter weather," said Hugh.

"Yas," answered John, "plenty war-parties he goin' h'out h'all time, take plenty horses. Goin' to Crow, h'Assinaboine, Gros Ventres, Pend d'Oreilles, h'all peoples. Sometime goin' 'gainst white mans."

"And I suppose plenty of people come to war against them, too," said Hugh. "If they take lots of horses, they lose lots too, I expect."

"Hoh' yas," said John, "plenty horses stolen. Last summer Crows he take 'im 'bout two hundred, one night. Lone Person he loss 'bout hundred. You know it Heavy Runner—white mans call 'im Brocky. Well, seh, last summer, Crees he comin' down pour steal 'im horses. Somebody see it, h'every body h'running try pour keel 'im Crees. Young man, Wolf Eagle, Cree shoot it 'im in h'arm. Heavy Runner he chase 'im one Cree; Cree jump in washout pour fight; shoot it 'im Heavy Runner in forehead; Heavy Runner shoot it, keel 'im Cree. Heavy Runner get well, may be bullet follow bone of his haid round, no go through. Plenty dances over Cree his scalp. War now, not so good lak' in

h'ole days. Too much soldier now; chase it war party, take away horses."

"Yes, I expect it's a heap different up there now from what it used to be; like it is everywhere in the country since the railroads come and turned things upside down. There's too many people in the country now, and they ain't the right sort of people either."

"Yas, Hugh, h'ole man, peoples lak' you an' me we can' change, we too h'ole. We been loky we was borned in good times, mais we had bad lok we lived too long."

"Well, anyhow, John, I'd like mighty well to go up north again, and maybe I will some day. When you goin' back there?"

"My not know yet. Maybe one, two mont'. Suppose maybe you goin' back sem time my go?"

"John stopped talking, and taking his pipe from his fire bag, began to clean and fill it. This was rather a long slow process, during which nothing was said. After the pipe was going well, John sat back, and casting his eyes about the bunk-house noticed the bear-skin hanging against the wall. Pointing to it, he said, "You kill it' 'im bear, Hugh?"

"No, the boss killed that fellow. It must have just come out, for it was right fat. There is lots of bears here, John, but no buffalo. We've got to go more'n two hundred miles to kill buffalo. Last year I seen one dead one out on the prairie about twenty-five miles from here, but that's the only one

I've seen about here in a long time. Plenty buffalo up north, I expect."

"Plenty," was the answer. "He trade it two store, Carroll. H'all H'ingin' comin' trade; Cree, h'Assinaboine, Gros Ventres, Sircee, Blackfeet, Blood, Piegan; got plenty whisky, trade plenty h'robe. Sometime he faightin', *les chauvages*, when he bin drunk. Sometimes he keel it two tree H'ingin' faightin: sometime in winter, cole he keel it, froze 'im so he was die. You know it Calf Shirt, Blood Chief; well, seh, he keel it 'im white mans. Calf Shirt he drunk, want keel it white mans, one h'woman run quick tole um. When Calf Shirt comin' pour faight, white mans shoot it 'im, maybe six, seven, ten time. Soon he daid."

"Well, well!" exclaimed Hugh, "It's like old times yet up north after all."

CHAPTER X

COWS IN A SNOW-DRIFT

THE next morning the snow had ceased falling and the sun shone bright and clear. Hugh declared that it was just the day for putting out his coyote baits, which he intended to string along the mountains north of the house, to try to poison some of the coyotes that were watching the calves. These baits were blocks of wood in which one and a half inch augur holes had been bored to a depth of three inches. Into these holes melted tallow had been poured until the holes were full. The coyotes were expected to eat little balls of tallow containing strychnine scattered on the ground, and to remain near the blocks, licking at the tallow in the augur holes, until the poison which they had taken should act, so that they would die near the blocks. Thus the wolfer would get the skins of the animals that he killed.

Hugh put the blocks containing the baits in two sacks and lashed them on a pack horse, and soon with Jack and John he was riding through the snow north along the mountain-side. Soon after starting, Hugh tied a piece of elk-hide to one end of his rope,

and taking a turn of the other around the horn of his saddle, dragged it behind him over the snow. This, he told Jack, was to lead the wolves to follow the trail, so that they might come to the baits. "Of course," he said, "they'd follow it up anyhow, but the smell of this hide'll keep 'em thinking about eating." After they had gone a few hundred yards, Hugh dismounted on top of a little ridge, and here threw down one of his pieces of wood, and about it scattered several balls of poisoned tallow and a handful of chips of dried meat, which he took from a sack. This he repeated at intervals of half a mile as they went along. When they reached the spot where the cows were, they found most of them feeding on a warm, sheltered hillside, which was almost free from snow. There were now many more calves than when they had seen them last. Hugh sat for a long time looking at the animals, while John Monroe rode to the top of a near-by hill, from which after a moment he called aloud, made some motions with his hands and pointed.

"That's good," said Hugh to Jack. "He sees them cows." They galloped up to John who motioned toward the mountains where a number of dark animals were seen standing in the snow.

"Well, John," said Hugh, "we've got to get them out. It's a bad place, too. There's a big drift there. I'll bet the snow's four feet deep."

Riding toward the cows, they saw that there were seven of them standing in the deep snow, which reached half way up to their backs. Two or three

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of them had moved a little, treading down the snow about them so that they had room to turn around; beside these, calves were standing. All the cows looked cold and hungry and fierce-eyed, and two or three shook their heads angrily as the horsemen pushed their way toward them through the ever-deepening snow.

"Well, now, boys," said Hugh, "we've got to break a road as near the critters as we can, and then rope 'em and snake 'em out. Son, you'll have to look out. Every one of them cows is fighting mad, and likely every one of 'em's got a calf, which will make her fight harder. John, you and me'd better take this nearest one first. Son, when we get the ropes on her, maybe you can get around and hurry the calf along close to her."

For a few moments Hugh, John and Jack rode back and forth through the deep snow, until they had broken a trail from a point where the snow was only knee-deep nearly to where the nearest cow stood. Each time when they got near her, she shook her head at them and looked as if she were going to charge. When the road through the snow was pretty well broken, John and Hugh rode up near to the cow, and then separating, each of them threw his rope. Hugh's settled fairly over both horns, but John's caught only one of them, slipped off and had to be gathered and thrown again. Then both men turned their horses toward the path and slowly dragged the cow over and through the snow. As the cow, bellowing and

struggling furiously, passed along, a pitiful feeble cry came from the hole where she had stood, and Jack, spurring his horse up to the place, saw standing there a little weak staggering calf. The snow was deep, even where the cow had been dragged, and the calf could not get out of the hole. As Jack sat there gazing at it, suddenly a rope flew over the calf's neck, and looking, Jack saw John whirling his horse, and then saw the calf fly out of the hole and over the snow at the end of the rope. He followed to where Hugh sat on his horse by the cow, which lay on its side, all tangled up in the rope. There John loosed the calf, which, after a moment, staggered to its feet; and then Hugh, by a few jerks on his rope, freed the cow, which got up and began to lick the calf. Then, the two old men rode back to where the other cows stood in the snow. Jack could not understand why the calf had not been choked to death, nor how the cow had been tied, and then so suddenly untied. He determined that he would watch. He hurried back to where the men were breaking another path, but before he reached them they had roped the cow and were dragging it over and through the snow. The cow bellowed piteously, but moved along so steadily and fast that she could not struggle. Jack drew out of the way to let them pass, and then rode up to the hole, where he saw the little calf. This time he thought he would try his hand; he threw his rope twice and at last it went over the calf's head; then he very gently pulled it tight, and taking a turn of

the rope over the saddle-horn, turned and rode slowly toward the others. He did not want to go fast, for he did not want to hurt the calf. Before he had gone far he met John riding back. He called to him: "Hurry! hurry! Ride more fast, else you're goin' kill 'im de calf. You choke it 'im." Jack hurried on then, and stopped when he was near Hugh, who, as before, was holding the tied cow. "Loose the calf as quick as you can, son, and let it get up." Jack dismounted and took the rope from the calf's neck, but it lay there perfectly still.

"Oh, Hugh, I'm afraid I've killed it," said Jack.

Hugh dismounted quickly, leaving the horse standing with the rope stretched tightly between the horn of the saddle and the cow, and walked to the calf.

"You choked it too long," he said. "But I guess we can fix it." He worked over the calf for a little while, and soon it began to breathe again without any help.

"There! He's all right now; but the next time you snake a calf by the neck, hurry him along. If you cut off his wind too long, he'll die on you."

"Why, the reason I went slowly was that I didn't want to hurt it. If Mr. Monroe hadn't told me to come faster, it would have been dead before I got here."

"It sure would," said Hugh. "If you're handling cattle you have to be quick about it often. It's easier on the critters, even if it does look rough. There, that calf can stand now, I guess. Let's drag

it over to its mother and turn her loose. Now we've got to get the others out. I expect old John'll wonder what's keeping us."

He took the calf by the fore legs and dragged it over the snow to where its mother lay, then mounted his horse, and seeing that Jack also had mounted, quickly freed the cow from the rope. When she sprung to her feet, she ran to the calf and began to lick it, and in a few moments it stood up. Meantime Jack and Hugh had gone back and met John, who was slowly dragging a large cow over the snow. She struggled and fought, and the little pony that John was riding had his hands full to keep her moving in the right direction. As soon as Hugh's rope fell over her horns, and the two horses began to pull together, she moved swiftly and steadily along. Jack rode on to get the calf. At first he thought there was none there, but looking carefully he saw a foot and part of a leg sticking out from the snow where the cow had been standing. He dismounted, and digging away the snow, by pulling and pushing he brought to light a big strong calf, which at once stood up. This time, Jack did not try to be tender with the calf. He threw his rope over its head, took the turn of his rope over the saddlehorn, pulled the calf up out of the snow pit and then galloped back to where the cow lay. As soon as he cast the rope off the calf, which this time he did without dismounting, the animal stood up and bawled for its mother. Hugh turned her loose, and they all went back for another cow. In this way they

pulled out all the cows and their calves, and before the middle of the day had started back to the ranch.

The weather had become milder, and now the snow was melting a little. "Might be such a thing, my son, as we'd find a coyote at some of these baits. 'Tain't likely though. Still we'll go back the same way we came."

"Snow on ground, maybe coyotes pretty hungry. Why you no make 'em trap like H'ingin?" said John.

"Ain't wolves enough for it, and besides that, I don't believe I ever thought of it before. Might be a good idea, though. Maybe I'll try it next winter, if coyotes is anyways like as plenty as they are now. Poison's no good any more."

"What kind of trap is that, Hugh?" asked Jack.

"Why, it's sorter like a pitfall trap that I've heard tell of. You kill a bull, and all around him build up a kind of a fence of poles close together, and all leaning toward each other at the top, where you leave quite a hole. Then you pile up rocks and dirt around your poles, so's to make a little mound for the wolves to walk on up to the hole. If they're hungry enough they'll jump down into the hole to get at the meat, but they can't jump out again because the hole is too high up. They can't climb up the poles and they can't dig through 'em. So there you've got 'em."

"Long time ago," said John, "he catch 'im plenty big wolves, plenty coyote that way, *les*

chauvages. My grand'mère, when she was little girl, 'bout as h'ole as Jacques, H'ingins not make it beaver, not make it h'robes pour trade. H'only trade 'im wolf skin. Ver' curieuse."

"Oh, Mr. Monroe," said Jack, "is that a coyote off there?"

"No, that sinopah—what you say it, Hugh?" was the reply.

"Kit fox is what I call him, some calls 'em swift. I've heard folks say that they were the fastest thing that runs on the prairie, but it ain't so, by a long shot. There's just plenty of swifter animals. Still you can see easy enough where people get the idea that they run so fast. They're mighty level-gaited and seem to sort o' glide along instead of running. Just watch that fellow now and see how smooth he runs.

"Hallo, Hugh," interrupted John, "you get it one coyote?"

"Well, looks like it, don't it?" said Hugh. The little wolf lay near the block of wood, from the holes in which much of the tallow had been licked. It was a pretty creature, about as large as a small setter dog, yellowish grey in colour, and with thick heavy fur and a bushy tail. Its sharp nose gave it a wise, cunning look.

"He been two of it here, Hugh," said John, whose eyes was constantly wandering about over the snow. "Two coyote and sinopah."

"Yes; the other one's gone back along the trail to the ranch. They've eat up all the scraps I scat-

tered here. Well, I'll put this one on the horse, and skin it at the house." Hugh thrust the coyote into one of the sacks on the pack horse, and they went on.

A mile or two further along on the trail they found where the second coyote had turned off toward the mountain, and both men said that this one had probably not eaten any of the poisoned tallow. That afternoon Hugh showed Jack how to skin a **coyote.**

CHAPTER XI

JACK'S FIRST ELK

THE next two or three weeks were warm and bright and the snow melted fast. The little brooks that ran down from the mountains were full of water. Out on the edge of the hay meadows the men were working with ploughs, spades and hoes, mending the irrigation ditches, which would be used to turn the water on the hay land after all the snow water had run off and the dry season had come. There was much of this work to be done, and all were busy at it, except John Monroe and Jack, who rode together each day.

One morning they went out to look at the cows, and then on past them, and out to the end of the mountain. Here turning west, they followed a narrow winding trail up the hill, until they had reached the crest of the ridge and could look over much of the prairie below. Here they dismounted, and leaving the horses in a little hollow where they could feed, they clambered upon a high rock-crowned knoll and sat there looking over the prairie. It was a wide and beautiful prospect that they saw ; fifteen or twenty miles of prairie, which from this height

looked as if it were level, marked here and there with lakes that shone like silver in the sun, or with white patches of snow in the sheltered ravines. Beyond were mountains; those in front of them dotted with black pines and with white patches of rock; those to the right rising in brown foothills to peaks which were almost as red as blood. Suddenly, John, who had been smoking in silence, said: "My see 'im two h'elk."

"Two elk, Mr. Monroe; oh, where?" said Jack.

"You look on prairie, that a-way," said John, pointing, "just crossin' from Chalk Bluff there, Two small little spots movin'. That h'elk."

Jack strained his eyes to find them, but he could see nothing. He had not yet learned how to look for objects on the prairie. Presently, just as he was going to tell John that he could not see them, he dropped his eyes to the prairie nearer the point of the mountain and saw two dark spots, which seemed to be moving.

"I see them now, Mr. Monroe," he exclaimed eagerly. "Are those elk? I don't see how you know. I can see that they move, and so they must be animals, but I should never know what they were."

"Yes, that's h'elks," repeated John. "Suppose you want it kill 'im one h'elk? Get it some meat?"

"Oh, wouldn't I like to? Could we get a shot, do you think? They're awful far off," said Jack.

"Maybe he comin' right up here. Suppose he comin' up one trail, he come to us. Suppose he

take trail we come by, smell 'im horses, then goin' run off quick. Suppose we go to point of mountain, see 'im bote trails. Maybe we get it shot. Come."

They clambered down from the rocks and soon caught their horses. Jack mounted first, and sat there impatient to start. But John checked him, saying :

"Suppose no hurry. Good you fix it saddle." So Jack controlled himself, and remembering what Hugh had told him about taking care of his horse's back, he dismounted and tightened his saddle. John had done the same, and they mounted and rode off together, keeping on the crest of a ridge, on one side of which ran the trail they had followed up the hill. On the other side was a little valley overgrown with aspens, among which ran a brook.

If he had been alone, Jack would have galloped as hard as he could to the end of this ridge, so as to see the elk soon and to find out what they were doing, but he remembered again what Hugh had told him, and he remembered too, how he had lost the first antelope he had tried to hunt. So he asked no questions and rode quietly along, feeling pretty sure that John must know what he was doing. At length, when they had nearly reached what seemed the end of the ridge, John pointed to the valley where the brook ran, and said :

"Suppose he comin' h'up there, we get 'im suer." A little while afterward, he said, "Leave 'em horses here," and dismounted, and taking his gun from its scabbard, he walked forward toward the end of the

ridge, where great rocks lay scattered over the ground. Jack, as he followed, noticed that John as, he walked, made no sound. The gravel did not crunch under his moccasins, his trousers did not rub against the weeds and bushes. As he made each step, his toe touched the ground first, then the ball of his foot, and then his heel. If he had been a cat walking over a carpet, he could not have made less noise. It seemed to Jack that every time he himself put down his foot, it made a loud rattling on the ground, the sides of his feet scraped against the bushes, and he made a great noise. Before they had gone very far, John turned and made a sign for Jack to stop. Then he cautiously went forward and peered over some rocks, and then slowly lowering his head, he beckoned Jack to come to him. When he had reached John, the old man pointed and said: "Suppose you look. See 'im h'elk comin' h'up this side?"

Jack raised his head very cautiously and looked over the rock, and there, only a few hundred yards away, coming up the side of the ridge he saw two animals nearly as big as horses. Their bodies and legs were graceful and deer like, but they carried their heads and necks very awkwardly. Their noses pointed straight out in front, and they moved their heads slowly from side to side. They had no horns, but where the horns should have been were odd thick bunches, only a little longer than their ears. Their bodies were brownish yellow. He had hardly had time to see these things, when John touched

him on the shoulder, and motioned him to come with him. They went back a little distance from the rocks, and entering a ravine that ran down to the valley, crept part of the way toward the timber, and then up the side of the ravine toward the elk. From the top of the ridge they could see the game coming directly toward them. The animals did not stop to feed, but walked straight on, as if they were going somewhere.

"Soon he comin' close. Suppose you shoot, try kill 'im daid. Suppose he wounded, maybe run far. Hard time catch 'im. That bad. Now wait."

For some minutes they sat there, John saying nothing and doing nothing, but Jack feeling very anxious. He remembered the great pair of elk antlers that his uncle had at home, and though these elk here had no horns, still they were the same kind of animals. He wanted very much to kill one, and his heart had been beating fast ever since he had started. While they sat there though, he seemed to quiet down a little ; he still wanted just as much to kill the elk, but when he saw how calm John was, he felt a little bit ashamed that he should be so excited, and this made him cool down still more. At length John said : " Suppose h'elk pretty close. My goin' look now." He crept up and peeped over the ridge and then drawing back, motioned Jack to come to his side, which he did, creeping as close to the ground as possible. John signed to him to shoot. He crept up very carefully, raised his head slowly, and there he saw these two great animals

about to cross the ravine, hardly forty yards below him. They were walking, but, before he raised his rifle to shoot, both elk stopped, and seemed to be looking over the country beyond the ravi Jack aimed carefully behind the elk's shoulder and low down, and fired. Both elk slowly turned their heads and looked toward the hunters, but neither moved. "Shoot," whispered John, and Jack threw out his shell, loaded and shot again, aiming at the same place, and, as the second shot rang out, the elk fell on its side, and its companion turned and trotted swiftly away.

"Ha! You shoot good," said John, as he rose to his feet and walked toward where the elk lay. Jack wanted to shout out hurrahs, he was so glad, but he said nothing and walked along by John's side, trying to seem unconcerned, but with a broad smile of happiness upon his face. In a moment they had reached the great animal, which lay there with its slender brown legs outstretched, and its smooth yellow body glistening in the sun.

"Ha!" said John, "You make it good shoot. Good shoot," and he pointed to the elk's body, where, close behind the fore leg, were two tiny holes, not two inches apart, where both the boy's bullets had entered. Either shot would have killed him.

While Jack was looking at the elk, admiring his graceful, strong body, and wondering at the queer, soft warm bunches that grew out of his head, and which he knew must be the young growing horns, John sharpened his knife and prepared to cut up the

bull. Bending its head back close to one of its shoulders, he turned the animal on its back, and propped it in position by placing a large stone under its hip. Before using his knife, however, he said to Jack, "Suppose you no want it skin, take it meat to house. Now, skin no good for moccasins. Bimeby, be good."

Jack would have liked to carry in the whole elk, so that all might see what a splendid animal he had killed, but he was ashamed to say so to John, and returned a cheerful "All right," to his suggestion.

John's sharp knife quickly cut off the elk's hams and shoulders and then, turning the animal on its side, the long strips of meat lying on either side of the back-bone—the sirloins—were torn out. Then very deftly John tied the hams together and threw them across Jack's saddle, fastening them to the cinch rings, put the shoulders and sirloins on his own horse, and they mounted and rode off down the mountain.

The ride toward the ranch was a happy one for Jack. He was glad that he had killed the elk, glad that he had made two such good shots, and he hummed a little song to himself as he rode along and every now and then reached down and smoothed the skin of the elk hams. He could not help thinking how badly he would have felt if he had missed the shot, and the elk had run away, or even if he had missed and John had killed it. This was much better.

Although this was only the second animal that he

had killed, Jack was beginning to feel some confidence in his shooting, and was beginning too to understand that he knew nothing about hunting. He could not understand how it was that Hugh and John seemed to know exactly what to do. He could see though that they were never in a hurry, that they were not uneasy about whether the game was going to run away or not, that they were patient and took plenty of time. All this was just what Hugh had told him about hunting, and Jack determined that he would try hard to remember and always to act on it.

The sun was just setting as they rode up to the house. Two of the men could be seen coming across the prairie, driving a bunch of horses before them, and Hugh was just coming down to the corral to let out the milk cows.

He smiled as he saw the meat on the horses, and called out, "Well, son, you've got some meat, I see."

"Yes, seh," said John, "Jack make it good shoot. Good shoot, my tellin' you."

"You killed it, did you, son? Why, that's good. Where'd ye hit it?"

"Good shoot my tellin' you," repeated John. "Plum centre. *Il l'a brisé le cœur deux fois*. Two time."

"You don't say! Why, son, you're goin' to make a sure enough hunter all right. Now, let's hang this meat up on the pole, where the flies won't bother it."

They took the meat off the horses at the foot of a tall pole that stood near the corner of the house, and by means of a pully at the top of the pole, it was hoisted far above the ground where it would be cool and dry, and out of the way of the flies.

A few days later John Monroe packed his horses, and started on to Bear River to visit his daughter. He said that he would return toward the end of the summer and see them again.

CHAPTER XII

ANTELOPE KIDS

"SON, do you want to ride down to the lake with me," said Hugh one day in June, as they sat at dinner.

"Yes, Hugh, I'd like to go. Right after dinner?" said Jack.

"Yes, if your uncle don't want me, we might as well start right off. You get your gun and catch up the horses, and I'll come down and saddle up as soon as I can."

Jack caught the horses and took them to the barn, where he found Hugh waiting, and in a few moments they were on their way. When they had nearly reached the lake, Hugh turned to Jack and said, "Now, maybe we'll see some fun. This morning when I was in the pasture, I saw an old doe antelope down on the flat here, and I reckon she's got kids hidden somewhere. We can lie behind the hill and watch for them. Maybe we'll have company too; there's likely to be a coyote or two about, so you may as well fetch your gun with you."

They left the horses in a little hollow, and creep

ing up to the top of the hill, carefully looked over it. At first they could see nothing living, but after a moment Hugh said, "Look out! keep close! there's a coyote coming out of the gulch over there." They watched the cunning animal as it trotted out into the flat where the grass was up to its belly, and there it began to quarter the ground, just like a hunting dog, yet every moment or two it would pause and look up toward the hills, as if it were afraid of something that was coming. What this something was they soon saw, for presently a doe antelope came galloping over the hills toward the flat, and when she saw the coyote she ran faster, directly toward it. As soon as it saw the doe, the coyote dropped its head and tail and started to run away, at first slowly, but, as the antelope drew nearer to it, much faster, until presently it was running nearly as fast as the doe. Before it had crossed the flat the antelope had nearly caught it, and now the coyote was running as fast as it could, with its tail tucked between its legs, like a frightened cur. As the little wolf ran up to the hill on which they were lying, the antelope caught up with it, and several times struck it with her hoof, and each time she did so, the wolf yelled with pain, just as a dog would yell when struck with a whip. Wolf and antelope passed close by the watchers and soon disappeared over the next hill.

Then Hugh said to Jack, "Look out, now! that coyote has a partner somewhere about, and, unless I am mistaken, he will show up in two or three

minutes." Sure enough, when they turned around and looked at the flat, there was a coyote just beginning to search through the grass, as the other one had done. It was evident that these two wolves were working together, and that while one led the doe away from the neighbourhood of her young ones, the other searched to try to find out where they were hidden. However, the old doe seemed to be pretty wise and did not chase the first coyote far; so that the one left on the ground had hardly time to begin his hunt before the antelope made her appearance again on the flat, and drove him off. As she began to do this, Hugh said to Jack, "Now, turn around and keep a good look-out for the other coyote; you may get a chance to kill him as he comes back." They had not been watching very long when the little wolf that had just been chased away came trotting unconcernedly around the base of the knoll, only a short distance from them. They sat quite still and he did not notice them, but went on until he reached the top of the rise from which he could see the flat. Here he stopped only about forty yards from Jack, and a careful shot dropped him in his tracks.

"Well," said Hugh, "that's a good shot, and a good job too. That other coyote will have to go now and hunt up another partner. I reckon we've saved them kids. Maybe if we lie here a little longer and watch, the old doe will go up to her young ones, and we'll see where they are hidden; then, if you like, we can catch them and take them home."

"Let's wait and see if we can find them," said Jack. "I'd like awfully well to see them and see what they look like, but I don't want to take them away from the old one; she's had trouble enough with these coyotes; let's leave her young ones with her."

"That suits me to a T," said Hugh. "Let's move down a little bit from the top of the hill and skin this coyote, and we can look at the old doe every little while, and if she isn't bothered, likely before long she will go to her young ones."

They skinned the wolf, and every now and then either Hugh or Jack went to the top of the hill and looked over at the antelope. The coyotes bothered her no more; she fed about in the flat, and at length went up on a little side hill and lay down for an hour or two. Then she rose and began to feed again, and after wandering about in rather an aimless fashion for half an hour, she walked over to a bare hillside, where nothing seemed to be growing, and in a moment they saw two tiny kids standing by her side.

"Now," said Hugh, "you notice well where those kids are, and we'll go and get the horses and ride over to them. You will see that just as soon as we show ourselves, the kids will disappear and the old one will run off. You won't be able to see the kids until you're right on top of them."

Sure enough, when they rode over the hills, and the old doe saw them, she cantered away and no young ones were to be seen, but when they reached the spot, two small grey objects looking at a little

distance like stones, lay on the ground there. Jack dismounted and picked one up; its legs and head hung down as if it were dead; it made no movement and uttered no sound, but its bright little eye was full and round.

"That's the way it is with them," said Hugh. "Until they are a week or ten days old they act just like that. I expect it's born in them to act like they are dead until their mother tells them it's safe to seem to be alive."

It was a little hard for Jack to leave the kids here. They were such queer-looking little beasts that his wish to possess them almost overcame the sympathy he had felt for their mother, but after what he had said to Hugh he was ashamed to change; and so, rather regretfully, he left the kids lying there on the hillside, for their mother to find when she came back.

As they rode toward the house, talking of the animals they had been watching, Jack was loud in his sympathy for the antelope, and declared that if he could do so, he would kill every coyote in the country. "Well, I don't know, son," said Hugh, "Coyotes are mean and do right smart of mischief, but they've got feelings, just like folks. Did ye ever think of that?"

"How do you mean, Hugh?" asked Jack.

"Why, I mean that they've got to eat and drink, and sleep, just like the antelope, or, for the matter of that, just like us. They've got little ones to look out for and feed, and I make no doubt

the old mother coyote thinks just as much of her young ones as the antelope does of hers. I don't mean to say that I like coyotes; they're pesky critters, and often I get mad with them and feel, like you do, that I'd like to kill 'em all; but what I say is that it ain't no more cruel for a coyote to kill an antelope, than it is for an antelope to take a bite of grass."

"I never thought of it in that way, Hugh, but that is so. But you can't help feeling sorry for the little kids and for the old ones, too."

"That's all right enough, but what I say is, if you are going to feel sorry for one thing, you've got to feel sorry for all. And what's more, talking about coyotes, they're so almighty smart, that you can't help admiring them, and thinking they earn all they get."

Talking about these things, they rode over the low hills till they had come to the edge of the valley leading up to the house. Here Hugh checked his horse and pointed to a small animal, walking about in an aimless way near the gully through which the creek flowed. "There's a badger," he said. "Now, if you like, we can get down into the creek bed and creep up close to him and watch him for a spell. What do you say?"

"That'll be bully; let's do it; but can we get close enough to see him well?"

"There won't be any trouble about that, but we'll have to go back a little ways," said Hugh. "Come on."

They rode back a short distance, and around a little hill, and dismounting, walked down into the bed of the stream. The banks of the narrow water-course were eight or ten feet high, and of course hid them from anything on the level of the valley. After they had gone some little distance, Hugh signed with his hand to Jack to wait, and slowly raising his head above the bank, looked through a bunch of grass growing on its edge. After a moment he motioned Jack to come up beside him, and whispered to him, "He's right close, not twenty feet away;" and he pointed. Jack looked carefully over the bank and saw a queer short-legged grey animal with white stripes on his face, walking about and smelling at some little piles of earth. The long hair on either side of its body almost swept the ground, its face had an expression of great cunning, and its nose was long and pointed. It was a heavy, thickset animal, only about two feet long and very broad, but it stepped lightly enough from place to place, snuffing at each lump of earth or tuft of grass that it came to, not as if it were very much interested in it, but as if it felt that it would not do to pass by anything without examining it. Sometimes it would scrape away a little dirt, and smell the ground, and then move on. Often it lifted its head high and sniffed the air, moving its nose about and wrinkling it, as if to catch the faintest scent.

Now and then it sat up on its haunches and looked about, as if to see if any danger were near. When it did this, it held itself much as Jack had seen a

woodchuck. "He keeps a pretty good look-out, don't he?" whispered Hugh.

"You bet," said Jack, "he looks as if he knew pretty well how to take care of himself. How strong he seems to be, and what a sly, cunning face he has."

A few moments later the badger suddenly sat up very straight, with his fore legs hanging down by his side, and looked sharply toward a hill away from the house. In a few seconds the animal dropped down on all fours and galloped away toward a near-by hillside. "I expect he hears something coming, and he's making tracks for his hole. Ah, that's what it is," said Hugh, and he pointed to the hill toward which the badger had looked. Over this hill a man came riding, and about his horse were trotting half a dozen great, gaunt hounds. One of them saw the badger, and instantly the whole pack swept down the hill toward it, but just before the leading dog overtook it, the badger disappeared, and the dogs checked themselves and stopped. "I expect that's the Powell kid," said Hugh, as he climbed up the bank, followed by Jack. "He has a lot o' hounds, and catches considerable many coyotes."

As they walked back toward their horses, they met the rider, a boy only a little older than Jack, who seemed to know Hugh very well, and who shook hands with Jack, giving him a hard grip that almost hurt him. "Well, kid," said Hugh, "did ye get any coyotes to-day?" "Yes, I got three, and

started two more, but they got so big a start on me that I couldn't catch 'em. I got a kitfox too, but the dogs tore him all to pieces. Like to have got that badger that was near you, but he holed too quick."

"Better ride on up to the house and unsaddle, and get supper, and stop," said Hugh. "It's too late for ye to get home to-night."

"All right," said the boy, and whistling to his dogs, he rode on. Hugh and Jack soon overtook him, and when the three reached the barn, the stranger's horse was put in a stall, while the others were turned out. At the house young Powell was cordially welcomed by Mr. Sturgis, and soon all were seated at the supper table.

That evening the two boys had a long talk, and afterward a consultation with Hugh. Then Hugh went to Mr. Sturgis and asked him if he was willing to have Jack and himself go over the next day to the Powell ranch for two or three days, so that Jack might have a chance to see the hounds run coyotes. Jack's uncle said that he thought it a very good idea. So the next morning, just about sunrise, they set out on the thirty-mile ride.

CHAPTER XIII

JACK KILLS A LION

As they started off this morning Jack felt good ; he had been promoted ; he was riding a new horse. The grey, on which he had taken his first lessons in riding, was old and steady and slow ; very good to travel over the prairie on, but past his usefulness for any purpose except hunting or going after the saddle horses. So, a week or two before, Hugh had caught up for him a new horse, and he had tried it several times. It was a brown, seven years old, perfectly gentle, yet with plenty of spirit. Hugh had ridden it a good deal, and told him that it was one of the best horses at the ranch ; kind, gentle, very swift, and, better than all, a good hunting horse. He had said, "You don't need to watch the Brown when you're riding over the prairie, going anywhere, but if you ever start him after a bunch of elk or a band of buffalo, look out for him, unless you want to get right into the middle of them. He can catch elk too easy, and is faster than any buffalo cow I ever saw."

Jack wanted a good name for the horse. He did not like to call him merely Brown ; he wanted a name

that would mean something. Half a dozen names had been suggested, but none of them seemed quite to fit the horse. At last he decided that he would call the animal by the name of some Indian tribe. Blackfoot seemed a pretty good name, because the horse's feet were all black, but after thinking it over with a good deal of care, he determined to call the horse Pawnee.

This morning when they mounted and rode away, young Powell was loud in his praise of Jack's horse. He said, "I'll bet he's got the legs of any of these three horses. Mine is pretty fast and keeps pretty close to the dogs in the chase, but yours will run away from him as if he was standing still."

"That's right," said Hugh, "he's an awful good horse, and what's more, he's just as kind as he's good. You can get off him to hunt, and leave him, and you'll feel sure when you come back he'll be feeding in the same place. If you fire a shot, he puts up his head and looks at you with his ears pricked up, to see whether you've killed or not. Then, after you have butchered, if you lead him up to an animal to put the meat on him, he'll snort and curve his neck and look like he was terrible scared ; but when you commence to lift the meat to put it on his back, he'll kind of crouch down and lean towards you, to make it easier for you to get it on. You can shoot off him and he'll never move. Sometimes I've thought that when I raised the gun to my shoulder to shoot he stopped breathing for a minute.

I know he always kind o' spreads his legs to hold himself steady. You've got a good horse now, son, and I'd advise you to hang on to him as long as you're here at the ranch."

The ride down the valley was a pleasant one. The blue iris stood thick in the damp places. The brilliant red and yellow flowers of the cactus dotted the hillsides. White poppy blossoms swung in the wind, and, if one had been on foot the tiny blooms of the yellow violets, which send their roots so far down into the hard dry soil of the prairie, could have been seen thickly scattered on the slopes. It was a time, too, of singing birds. The clear, sweet whistle of the meadow-lark came from the hills near-by, and was answered from other farther hills in a faint refrain, which sounded like an echo. The little finches of the prairie rose from the ground high in air, and then descended slowly on motionless wings, singing as if their throats would burst. From far on high fell the tinkling notes of the unseen prairie skylark floating above them. Little ground squirrels and prairie dogs were busy everywhere, but as the horsemen and troop of dogs drew near, they scattered to their holes, and, after a few angry barks and squeaks, disappeared from sight. Now and then as they passed over some swell of the prairie they startled an antelope or two or three, which ran up on the neighbouring hills and stood there stamping and snorting. The dogs would look at them eagerly yet doubtfully, and would perhaps trot a little way toward them, but young Powell always whistled

them back. The prairie and the air above it were full of pleasant sights and sounds.

Young Powell said to Jack, "The dogs had some hard runs yesterday, and I don't want them to be chasing antelope to-day, and so far from home. I don't run antelope often, anyhow, though I've got some with these dogs, but I use them mainly for wolves and coyotes ; and it's a bad thing to have a lot of dogs think that they can run anything that gets up before them on the prairie. If I was going to run antelope, I'd have a special bunch of dogs for running them, and for nothing else."

"Then they've caught antelopes, have they?" asked Jack. "It hardly seems to me as if anything could catch an antelope, when it's really running as hard as it can."

"Oh, I don't know," said Powell, "there's lots of difference in antelopes. Some of them can run twice as fast as others. I almost roped an old doe once in a fair chase, and I wasn't riding anything but a slow cow pony at that. I never felt quite sure though whether I could have caught her or not, or whether she was just fooling me. I ran her and she took down a valley, and I caught up with her, and got so close that I was just getting my rope ready to throw, when she ran across a little green place where the grass stood pretty high. I would not have tried to cross it if I hadn't been after her, for it looked kind of wet, but I couldn't stop, and I put the spurs into the old horse, and he jumped right into the middle of it and stayed there.

and I kept going and hit the hard ground on the other side. When I got up and caught the horse, the antelope was out of sight. Still, I know mighty well that there's a big difference in antelope. You take an old buck, and even if you get a good start on him, the dogs have a hard time to get up to him. You take an old doe, or a yearling buck, and it's almost always caught a heap easier. You see those two little blue dogs, the smooth ones, the two that are ahead? They're the fastest dogs I've got. I always depend on them to stop a coyote or a wolf. If they can catch him and throw him it's a mighty short time till the other dogs get up, and then they all pitch in and chew him. These two yellow, rough-haired dogs here, the biggest ones, they're the fighters. They bring up the tail of the chase, but when they get to the wolf they don't stop, they pitch right in. If it's a coyote, one of them generally gets him across the chest and the other in the flank, and then the rest of the dogs take hold wherever they can, and they all pull in different directions. It don't take no time at all to kill a coyote, but of course a big wolf is different. I've had three dogs killed by wolves, and each one only had one bite. They're terrible strong, powerful animals.

"I want to show you twelve pups that I've got at the ranch. They're little fellows yet, but I expect to get some awful good dogs out of them. I tell you a dog don't last any time at all at this sort of work. Some of 'em get cut up by the wolves, and some break their legs or sprain their shoulders, run-

ning, and some get hurt by the horses. It's a pretty rough life on a dog; but while they last they've an awful good time." Chatting thus, they covered mile after mile of prairie. Jack's horse stepped along lightly and easily. From time to time Hugh lit his pipe and smoked. Powell watched his dogs. The sun was warm, the air clear and pleasant, and Jack thought that he had never enjoyed a morning more.

Suddenly, just in front of the two blue hounds that were trotting before them, a jack-rabbit bounced up and scurried away at top speed. In an instant all the dogs were running for it, and Jack and young Powell were close at their heels. It was a short run. The leading blue dog pressed the rabbit hard; he dodged in front of the second dog, and in a moment had to dodge again, which threw him into the jaws of the first and he had run his last race. It was short but exciting; doubly so to Jack who had never seen anything of the sort. Powell jumped down among the hounds and cuffed and scolded them, while he took from them the fragments of the rabbit, and then mounted, and they all went on. A little later the dogs all broke away again after a badger which showed himself on the side hill; but he dodged into his hole before they reached him, and the dogs came back, looking foolish. Powell now took from a pocket in his saddle a whip, with a handle about a foot and a half long, and a lash of eight or ten feet, and whenever a dog pressed forward ahead of the horses, he struck at it, and after



"THE ANIMAL LAUNCHED ITSELF FROM ITS PERCH FULL TOWARDS JACK."

—Page 131.

a little while the whole pack followed obediently at his horse's heels.

It was long past noon when they reached some high hills, rough and scarred with broken bad lands, on which grew a few stunted pines and cedars. They were climbing these hills, Jack a little in advance, when he saw rise from a shelf in the rocks, a long, slim, yellow animal, which began to sneak away up a ravine.

"Oh, Hugh, what's that?" the boy cried; and at the same time Powell gave a yell, which started all the dogs forward. "A mountain lion," Hugh called back: "The dogs will tree him, sure! Look out for him!" Jack hardly heard the words, for he was pressing forward close after the dogs, not thinking of the rough ground over which he was riding, but half wild with the excitement of the chase. The horses climbed the steep scarp of the hills at a run, and in a moment Jack found himself galloping over smooth, bare, yellow soil, fifty yards behind the last of the hounds, while the two blue dogs seemed but a few feet behind the lion. In a moment more the beast was safe among the branches of a cedar, the dogs clustered about its trunk, leaping into the air and showing the greatest excitement. When he was almost at the foot of the tree, Jack drew up his horse, and the moment it stopped, threw his gun to his shoulder and fired full into the chest of the lion, which stood facing him snarling and angrily twitching his tail this way and that. As the gun cracked, the animal launched itself from its

perch full toward Jack; and, as he looked up at it and saw it flying toward him, with gleaming teeth and outstretched paws, his heart jumped up into his throat. It looked about forty feet long. He never knew whether he spurred Pawnee or whether the horse started of its own accord, but it made three or four jumps, and when Jack looked back, there was the lion on the ground surrounded by all the dogs, which were pulling and tugging at it viciously. The beast was still, and Jack rode back near to it, to be heartily scolded by Hugh, who had just come up.

"Son," said he, "you done a fool trick that time. If you'd been on any other horse you might have been badly scratched. If you wanted to shoot at the lion, and I make no doubt you did, you'd ought to have stopped further off. You'll never make no sort of a hunter if ye don't think. It's all right for a man to take risks if there's anything to be made by taking them, but a man who takes risks just because he don't know no better is a fool. What's more, if you act this way, you're liable to make a fool of me. I'd have looked nice, wouldn't I, if you'd gone back to the ranch all scratched up. Now, of course," he went on more mildly, "I know you ain't anything but a boy, and you can't be expected to have a man's sense, but I want you to get sense as fast as you can, and sense means experience. I'm trying to give you as fast as I can the sense that it's took me forty years to learn. Now, let's see where you hit that fellow. I expect you made a right good

shot, for I didn't see the critter stir after he struck the ground."

Meantime young Powell had driven the dogs from the lion, and they had all stretched themselves out in the shade of a cedar, where they were lying, panting, with their tongues hanging far out of their mouths. One of them, Jack noticed, had a long bright red cut, extending nearly from shoulder to hip, from which the blood was dripping fast. They turned the lion over and found the bullet hole in the middle of the chest. It was a good shot, indeed, and the animal's wild spring out of the tree was his expiring effort. He was a very large animal, and quite old, as shown by the condition of his teeth.

"Well, son," said Hugh, "you certainly are in the biggest kind of luck. It's seven years since I've seen a lion about here, and they're never anyways common. Of course we wouldn't have got this fellow if it hadn't been for the dogs; and it's great luck for you who have only been out a month or two now, to have had such a chance as this. You made a mighty good shot, too, and when you take this hide back east you'll sure have something to talk about. I expect, though, your Ma wouldn't have been very happy if she'd been here and seen that lion come sailing out of that tree after you."

When they looked at the wounded hound they found that the long cut in its skin was much less serious than it seemed at first; it was hardly more than a scratch made by a last convulsive kick by

the lion, and, while it had cut the skin, and would leave a scar, it did not really injure the dog. They skinned the lion, leaving the claws on the hide, and rolled up the skin, tying it behind Jack's saddle, and then started on their way.

The sun was low in the west when they came in sight of the Powell ranch. They rode up to the barn and began to unsaddle, while the dogs went straight to the house. Before they had stabled the horses they heard a clear voice calling, "Why, Charley, what's the matter with Blue Dan? He's all cut up." And when they reached the door of the house they saw Mrs. Powell and Charley's sister, Bess, a little girl of thirteen, bathing the wounded dog, which seemed proud of the attention he was receiving. Hugh and Jack were cordially welcomed by Mrs. Powell, and later by her husband, when he came in from riding; and the story of the killing of the lion had to be told twice over. Every one congratulated Jack on his good fortune, and it appeared that this was the first time the dogs had ever seen a lion. "They have killed plenty of wolves, foxes, and coyotes," said Mr. Powell, "and two or three wolverenes, and of course a few bob cats, but I think they never chased a lion before."

After supper Charley took Jack out, and after considerable whistling, succeeded in bringing up to the house two tame coyotes, pets of which Charley was very proud. "We dug them out of a hole in the bank of a gulch a couple of miles from here," he told Jack. "There were three of them, and they were

so small that their eyes weren't open yet. I had to kill one, for it took to killing chickens. I sort of hated to do it, but I knew it was no use to try to keep him and hens both, and I was afraid he would teach the other two his tricks, so I shot him. These two fellows are all right. There's only one thing they do that makes me mad. Sometimes they wander away off onto the prairie, hunting for themselves; and two or three times I have gone after them with the dogs, thinking that they were wild coyotes. They will run and run as hard as they know how, and then, when the dogs are just about catching up to them, they'll flop over on their backs and lie there with their legs in the air until the dogs come up to them. Of course when the dogs get up to them and smell them, they know them, and won't touch them. Then the coyotes get up and play around and wag their tails and jump about, like they'd been doing something almighty smart. In that way they just have fun with us."

When bed-time came that night, Jack was ready for it. His thirty-mile ride and the excitement of the day had made him very weary.

CHAPTER XIV

WOLVES AND WOLF-HOUNDS

AT breakfast next morning Mr. Powell said, "I suppose you boys will go out with the dogs to-day, and I wish you would go over east to where the blue stallion's bunch ranges. There's two yearlings been killed since I was over there last, and I believe it's wolves that done it. If them worthless dogs of yours would kill a few wolves instead of all these coyotes they'd come nearer earning their keep than they do."

"Well, I don't know," answered Charley, "I don't think they've done so bad. Seven wolves since Christmas is pretty good, I think; and the coyotes does a heap of mischief, and are sure worth killing."

"Well, well," said his father, "do the best you can to get these wolves. It's all right to kill the coyotes, but one wolf is worse than ten of them little fellows."

"Well, what time are you boys going to start out," said Hugh. "I expect you won't want to leave here till after dinner. I was thinking I'd go with you, but the first thing I want to do is to stretch that lion's skin, and I expect I've got to set and watch

it till it begins to get dry, or else them dogs of yours will be chewing and tearing it."

"Oh," said Charley, "we'll have plenty of time to get over to the blue stallion's range if we start after dinner, and of course it might be such a thing as we'd run onto one of them wolves, if they are there. Did you see any tracks, father? or was it just the way the colts were killed?"

"No," said his father, "I didn't have no time to hunt around for sign, but it wan't nothing but wolves that killed them yearlings. If they'd only been one of them, he might have got out away from the bunch and been cut off and killed by coyotes, but that wouldn't happen twice in a few days. It's wolves, I tell you, and the chances are they've got young ones somewheres not so very far off. There's something that 'ud make it worth your while to hunt 'em. You might get a nest of young pups."

"Great Scott!" said Jack, "that would be fine." While Hugh added, "There's a chance for you, Charley, to get up the greatest pack of wolf-dogs there ever was on earth. Get a lot of wolf pups, tame 'em and train 'em to catch and kill the wild wolves."

After breakfast Charley took Jack down to the barn and showed him two litters of greyhound puppies, both very small now, but likely to be large enough next spring, Charley said, to be used with the old dogs. They were queer, blunt-nosed, thick-legged little beasts, which waddled about in most clumsy fashion.

From there the boys went down to the hen-house, where, with great pride, Charley exhibited his chickens and some pigeons—the only ones within thirty miles. He complained that the hawks killed the pigeons if they ventured far from home, but said that from repeated frights, the birds were learning to keep closer about the building.

When they reached the house again, they found Hugh busy pegging out the lion's skin. He had skinned out the head, cut off every bit of flesh and fat from the hide, and pierced a number of small holes along its margin, and was now busy with a lot of sharp pointed wooden pegs, stretching the skin on the grass, flesh side up, so that it would dry and be preserved. This was new work to Jack, and he watched it closely and asked a number of questions about it.

"You see," said Hugh in reply, "if the hide ain't stretched and dried, it ain't no good. Some folks just take and nail up a hide any way at all against the side of the house, and of course it will dry that way, but it don't dry smooth, and it's apt to get twisted and to be no account. If I take in two hides, one dried this way, and one dried on the side of a house, and try to sell them to a dealer, he'll give me more for the one that is smooth and square than he will for one that is rough and crumpled and pulled to one side. After you know how, it ain't much more trouble to do the thing right than it is to do it wrong, so I think it pays better to do it right. There's lots to drying a hide that a good

many people don't know. Now, a thin hide, like this one here, glazes over quick, and don't take no time at all to dry, except maybe the lips, the feet, and the tail, but if I had a bear hide, or a beef's hide, I wouldn't stretch it out here in the hot sun to dry, or if I did, I'd build some sort of a shade over it, so that it would dry slowly. You take them hides that's right thick, and they're awful liable to burn if the sun's right hot. Now you take it when they was beaver in the country; no man ever thought of putting his fur out in the sun to dry. He hung his pelts up in the brush or in trees in the shade, and let the wind do the drying for him, and not the sun. There," he continued, as he pushed in his last peg to hold the tail straight, "Now, in an hour or two that hide will be set, so it'll hold its shape, and then you can take it up and hang it up in the barn. Now I'm going over to the creek to clean the meat off this skull. It's a big one, and you might as well take it home with you, 'long with the hide."

The work of cutting the meat from the skull, and of removing the brain, by breaking it up with a stick, did not take very long, but while it lasted Jack and Charley were much interested in watching the shoals of tiny fish which gathered in the stream, just below where Hugh was working, and fed on and fought over the fragments of brain and meat which floated down to them.

"Where in time did these fish all come from, Hugh?" asked Charley. "I never saw any fish in

the creek before. It seems like they ought to be big ones here too. These little fellers are bound to grow up, I expect."

"I guess not," said Hugh. "I guess these are the little kind that don't never grow no bigger. You take these little chickadees or these little brown ground birds; you never heard of them growing as big as an eagle or goose, did you? I expect likely there's a good many different sorts of fishes, just like there's a good many sorts of birds and animals, and each sort has its own size that it grows up to be, and it don't grow no bigger. These little fellows that you see here have come from a long way down the creek. You see, the water carries down the smell of the meat and the blood, and these fish follow up the trail through the water, just the same as a dog or a coyote will follow your trail over the prairie."

"Yes, I know that's so, Hugh," said Jack. "I've seen something just like this, fishing for bluefish, down in Great South Bay."

"What's Great South Bay, and where's it at?" said Charley.

"Why, it's on the south shore of Long Island, and it opens out into the ocean. If you could see far enough, and the world wasn't round, you could look across from there to Europe."

"Jerusalem, down at the edge of the salt water!" murmured Hugh.

"Yes," said Jack, "I've been down there fishing. They anchor the boat somewhere near the chan-

nel and then chop up a lot of bunkers, that's a very oily fish, you know, and then they throw this chopped-up fish overboard, a little at a time, and it floats down with the tide and makes a long slick on the water. It looks like a long, shiny ribbon. Well, the bluefish swimming around strike this slick, and follow it up until they come near to the boat, where the fishermen have their lines out with pieces of bunker on the hooks, then the fun begins. I have seen 'em catch bluefish that were longer than my rifle barrel."

"Well, well," said Hugh; "I expect them fish is mighty good eating, too. I'd like to catch one, but what I'd like better would be to stand on the shore there, and look out over that big water and maybe see the ships go sailing by."

After a last scrape and a last shake of the now partly cleaned skull, Hugh turned to Charley and said, "Kid, have ye got any ant-hills round here, where I can put this skull for awhile? I'd like to get them ants to finish up this job for me, but I don't want to put the skull where the dogs or the coyotes or the badgers will get hold of it and pack it off."

"There's plenty of ant-hills," said Charley, "on the side hill just up the creek, and I don't think nothing will touch the skull if you put it there. Coyotes and badgers don't come round the house much and the dogs won't be likely to get up there on the hill."

"We'll chance it, I guess, anyhow," said Hugh;

and they walked over to the hillside and half buried the skull in one of the largest and busiest of the ant-hills. After waiting a few moments, they saw that the new supply of food had been discovered and was being swarmed over by the eager ants, and then returning to the house, they found dinner was ready.

After dinner they saddled up and rode east over the prairie, to the range where the blue stallion held his bunch of horses. Nothing was seen on the way, for, as Charley said, the coyotes were pretty well cleared out immediately about the ranch. They had gone perhaps six miles, when a sound like the weak bark of a dog was heard from a near-by hillside, which Charley and Hugh both thought was a coyote barking. They galloped in the direction of the sound and when they topped the rise a little wolf was seen making off, more than half a mile away. It took a minute or two for the dogs to view him, but presently one of them saw him and started, and in an instant afterward the whole pack were strung out, closely followed by the riders. The speed of Pawnee gave Jack a great advantage over his companions, and he was soon but a short distance behind the heavier and slower dogs. Presently he had forged up alongside of them, and at length had passed all the hounds except the two blue ones. The coyote had not run straight away, but had bent his course a little to the north, and dogs and horses, taking advantage of this turn, had cut off the corner and made a decided gain on him. Slowly but stead-

ily the blue dogs crept up; both were running at about the same rate of speed, yet one kept three or four lengths behind the other, but both were gaining on the wolf. As they passed over a little swell in the prairie the leading dog was only a yard behind the prey, and just after Jack had come in sight of them again, both dogs put on a burst of speed, and the leading one, catching the coyote by the ham, tossed his head, and coyote and dog rolled over together. Almost at the same moment the second hound had the wolf by the throat, and, as Jack checked his horse, the big yellow dogs swept by him, and in an instant each had his hold and each stood braced back, pulling against the other five. A moment later Charley came up, and then Hugh, and all dismounted, while Charley made the hounds loose their hold, and horses and dogs stood about with lowered heads and heaving flanks.

"That fellow got too much of a start on us," said Charley, "I didn't think they'd catch him, and they wouldn't have done it either if he had not been a young one. He didn't really think they were after him until they'd come pretty close, and then it was too late for him to get away. His hide isn't very badly torn. I guess I'll take it along with me, and I'll get the bounty, even if I can't sell the hide." The time taken in skinning the wolf gave all the animals an opportunity to get their wind again, and when Charley had tied the hide on behind his saddle, all mounted and started on. Jack was full of enthusiasm for this sport. Never before had he enjoyed

such a fast ride, or had before him something that he felt he must overtake, or felt so strong a sympathy with the pursuers as on this afternoon.

"Yes," said Charley, "It's lots of fun, but you want to see them when they get a good start on a wolf. Then, besides the fun of the chase, there's the excitement of the fight that's sure to take place at the end of the chase. We ran down an old wolf last fall that killed one of the dogs, crippled another, and beat off the whole pack. He ran again when we came up, but they stopped him, and we finally had to kill him with a six-shooter. The dogs would not tackle him he was so big and strong."

"I never saw anything like it," said Jack, "when that small hound, that seemed not to weigh half as much as the coyote, threw up his head, the coyote just turned a summersault and before I could think what was going to happen next, the other dog had him by the neck, and it seemed to be all over."

They had not finished exchanging opinions about this chase, when, as they rode down into a narrow gully, a great animal jumped up from the shade of a little bush, dashed across a ravine and up the other side, while yells from Charley and Hugh proclaimed this a wolf; but the dogs had disappeared over the edge of the ravine before the men got their horses started into a run. For a long way the prairie before them was smooth and level, and it seemed as if the whole chase must take place before their eyes. The dogs were running bunched up close at the heels of the wolf, the two blue dogs being only

a little in the lead. Pawnee was running free, and nearly as fast as he could, for Jack never thought of checking him, or even of holding him up. The wolf seemed to be less swift than the coyote had been, and ran a little heavily, and the dogs were manifestly gaining on him, while Jack was gaining on the dogs. Very slowly but very steadily the pack, still keeping quite close together, crept up to the wolf, and at last the two blue dogs, this time side by side, forged up to his quarters. At the same moment, as it seemed, they reached out, and each catching him by a ham, gave him a little twitch and he rolled over, and before he could gain his feet was covered by the dogs. In a moment Jack was beside them, and, putting a strong pull on Pawnee, the horse plunged his forefeet into the ground, half threw himself on his haunches to stop, and Jack, unprepared for the sudden halt, flew out of the saddle, turned a summersault and came down heavily on his back, close to the struggling mass of dogs and wolf. He was a good deal jarred, but jumped to his feet and retreated a few yards. The struggle still continued, but in a moment more it was over, and the dogs had the wolf stretched out and were pulling against each other as he had seen them pull at the coyote. But there was one dog lying on the ground, breathing hard and bleeding freely from a horrible gash in his side. Charley and Hugh now came up, and the former, with his pistol in hand, stepped up to the dogs. The wolf was quite dead, but though he proved to be a young one he had badly damaged

the pack before he died. Two or three of the dogs had bad cuts, and the bite that had disabled one of the yellow hounds had crushed two ribs and had probably entered the lungs, for the dog was bleeding at the mouth and nose, as an animal does that has been shot through the lungs. Charley felt badly over the injury to his pets, and declared that they could go no further that day, but that he must take the pack back to the ranch, and must carry the crippled dog on his horse. They bound up its wounds with such rough surgery as was possible, and then, placing it across Charley's horse, started slowly for the ranch.

They had gone but a mile or two when, as they were riding along, they noticed a faint odour of decaying meat. Hugh left them here, and telling them that he would soon rejoin them, rode away against the wind. Half or three quarters of an hour later he overtook them. For a little while he was busy filling and lighting his pipe, and then he turned to Charley and said, "Well, kid, if you want to start that new pack of hounds, I guess we can do it to-morrow. I have found the place where the old wolf has got her puppies, and, unless she moves them to-night, we ought to be able to dig them out to-morrow. I expect you'll all be glad to use a pick and shovel doing this, if for no other reason than to save your stock."

"Why, Hugh," said Jack, "how in the world did you find where they were?"

"Well," said Hugh, "you all noticed that smell

of rotten meat back there a ways. I thought maybe it might come from the wolf's hole, or of course it might come from some animal that had died. I followed it up and it grew stronger and stronger, and at last I came to the edge of a ravine, where I could see the wolf's hole, and, from the carrion about it, I saw that they were still living there. Tomorrow, if Powell feels like it, we'll go up there with the waggon and maybe get the pups."

"You bet, father'll feel like it," said Charley. "He'll do most anything to get rid of these wolves."

When they reached the ranch, the first thing to be done was to care for the wounded dogs. Two of them had to have stitches taken to close their cuts, while the one most badly hurt had his wound washed out, the fragments of shattered bone removed, and was then placed so that he could not move. There seemed a fair prospect of his recovery.

At supper that night Mr. Powell was told of the discovery of the wolf's den, and gladly promised that he would go over there with the waggon and plenty of tools, in the hope that the young wolves might be captured or destroyed.

CHAPTER XV

DIGGING OUT A WOLF'S DEN

As all hands were down at the barn next morning, the two men hitching up the team and the boys saddling their horses, Hugh said, "I guess I'll ride in the waggon this morning and let old Baldy have a rest. I'm getting to be too old to race round over the prairie the way I've been doing the last two days. But I want you to look out for yourself to-day, son. I don't want anything bad to happen to you while we're off here away from the ranch. You seem to have a natural way of getting yourself into trouble. Two days ago you came pretty near being clawed by a lion, and yesterday you took a sort of a running jump into a scuffle between dogs and a wolf. You've got to look out for yourself and try to keep a head on your shoulders and think where you're going. When I saw you fly out of the saddle yesterday I could not help wondering whether you'd kill two or three dogs when you came down, or yourself. Do you feel pretty sore this morning?"

"Well," said Jack, "my shoulders are pretty lame, and my head aches a little, but I think I'll be all right after I've ridden a little way."

They started off all together, the boys riding soberly just ahead of the waggon. The prairie was rough with sage-brush and the team could only advance at a walk; so it took them nearly two hours to get to the ravine where the wolf's hole was. If Jack had been alone he would not have been able to find the place, but Charley seemed to know just where it was, and when Jack spoke to him about this he said, "Oh, it's easy enough. You see, I am riding all the time, and I know pretty nearly every hill and ravine within ten miles of the ranch, in any direction. Then, of course, there's the big high hills for landmarks, and even if I don't know the precise place that I am going to I can always ride toward the hill that I know lies beyond it. Then of course, the sun always gives a fellow his direction, and often the wind too, though you can't depend on that, for sometimes the hills make eddies, and the wind seems to change its direction."

"Why did you leave all the dogs at home?" said Jack, "I should think they might be useful in case you find the old wolf near the den."

"We ain't likely to do that," said Charley. "She's fed her puppies early this morning, and is probably lying up on some hill, quite a little way from the hole, and will see us and sneak off long before we get to it. Besides that, the dogs have had hard work for the last three or four days, and some of them are cut up too badly to take out, and even those that are well are likely to get tender-footed if they are run too often."

When they reached the ravine where the hole was, they drove down into it and stopped the team on the windward side. Hugh went up to look at the place, and returning, announced that he believed the pups were still there. They picketed out the horses where they could feed, and then carried up near to the hole the picks and spades, and a slatted box that had been prepared to hold the puppies, if they caught them, some sacks and a lot of leather strings, and a long slim pole that Hugh had cut that morning.

"Now," said Hugh, "I am going to try and find the direction this hole takes, and while I am doing that it would be good for you boys to cover up this mess."

The mouth of the hole was foul with decaying meat, old bones, parts of calves, colts, and rabbits that had been brought there by the old wolf for the young to eat and play with, and a little fresh dirt thrown over all this made the place much pleasanter.

Hugh worked for some time with his pole, trying to determine the direction in which the hole ran, but without much success. He could thrust the stick in for five or six feet, but, twist it as he might, it would not go further than that. The two men, therefore, took their picks and vigorously attacked the side of the bank, breaking down the dirt, which they afterward shovelled out. The bank was steep, and in order to make room to work they had to loosen and remove a considerable quantity of dirt.

so that their progress was slow. The morning was warm, and the work gradually grew harder and harder. About six feet from the entrance the hole took a sharp upward turn, and then seemed to run straight in. Probing it with his pole, Hugh felt something soft, and then pushing it in a little further, reached a wall of dirt, which he pronounced the end of the den. By moving the point of the pole from side to side he could feel the young wolves, and once, when he gave a sharp push, a sound like the yelping of a pup in pain came from the hole.

“Now, Powell,” said Hugh, “if we can make this hole a little larger, so that I can work my pole, I’ll put a rope on the end of it and try and snare some of them puppies. We’ve got to go pretty careful, though. I expect these little fellows are pretty good size by now, and they’re likely as not to make a bolt out of the hole when we get close to them, and maybe get off. Wish we had one of the dogs here. I’ll tell you what you two boys do: you get your gun, son, and Charley, you take your six-shooter, and stand just behind us, and if anything runs out, you try to kill it, but look out you don’t shoot your father nor me, and look out you don’t shoot the horses. These pups can’t run very fast yet, and you’ll have plenty of time to take a careful sight at them, and get them.”

The boys did as they were told, and while the work with pick and shovel progressed, waited and

watched. Nothing came out, however, and after a time Hugh declared that he was going to try to snare the pups. He fastened a short rope to the end of his pole and made in it a running noose about a foot in diameter. Then he lay down and began to angle for the little wolves. For some time he worked without success, but at length, giving a quick jerk, he rose to his feet, declaring, "I've got one," and dragged to the light a kicking, yelping puppy, caught by a hind leg. It was a dull white, woolly little beast, sharp-nosed and thick-legged, and about as big as a three months' old Newfoundland pup. As soon as it appeared, it was seized by Mr. Powell, who had wisely put on his heavy leather gloves. The creature fought like a little demon, and bit, and kicked, and struggled, and yelled, but soon a string of buckskin was tied about its muzzle, confining its jaws, its four legs were tied together, and it was thrown in a gunny sack, which was tied up and put in the slatted box. Again and again Hugh tried to get another, but without success, and finally, in disgust, he threw his pole aside, and the men attacked the bank again. Another hour's work enabled them to look into the hole, and to see a mass of grey huddled together, almost within arm's length of the opening. Hugh declared that if one of his arms were only six feet long, instead of three, he would reach in and haul the puppies out one by one with his hand. The entrance to the hole was now so large that either of the boys might have crawled in, as both proposed

to do, but the men declined to permit this. Cutting off his pole to about the depth of the hole, Hugh again began to try to noose the pups, and this time with success, for one by one he hauled out three more, which were disposed of as the first had been. The last pup, taking advantage of a moment when he had moved away from the hole, bolted out, but was struck a mighty blow with the spade by Mr. Powell and killed on the spot.

"Well," said Powell, "I calculate that's a mighty good day's job. Those five pups during the winter would have eaten five hundred dollars' worth of beef, and might have killed five thousand dollars' worth. It seems like I ought to make you men a good present for what you have done to help get rid of these varmints."

"Pshaw!" said Hugh, "we've been mighty glad to do it, and I expect son, here, would be mighty glad to take his pay in one or two of them pups that's in the waggon."

"Yes, indeed, Mr. Powell," said Jack, "we've been glad to help, and it's been great fun. Of course, if you and Charley don't want all these pups, I'd like one of them for myself, to see if I could not tame him and make a dog of him. It would be great fun to walk up and down the streets of New York, leading a real wolf at the end of a chain. I expect he'd take first prize at all the dog shows."

"I expect likely he would," said Mr. Powell, "and you'd be certain sure he had a good straight

pedigree, running back to the first wolf that ever came to America."

Mrs. Powell had put a lunch in the waggon, but before this could be eaten water must be found. Charley said that not more than a half-mile away there was a good clear spring, running out from under a rock in the bank, and when they went to the place they spent a pleasant hour eating their lunch, and lying in the shade of the waggon. Jack and Charley looked once or twice at the wolf pups, to see that they were still alive and still properly tied, and, at length, as the sun began to fall toward the western horizon, the party started for the ranch.

When they got there, it was necessary to make a permanent cage for the wolf puppies, as no box or rope would hold them long after their jaws were free. Charley asked Hugh what they had better do. They could build a log pen, but if they did that the pups would be likely to dig out under the logs. Hugh studied for a while and at length said, "I'll tell you what we've got to do; we've got to build a regular cage, with walls so smooth and high that the pups can't climb up them, and running down into the ground so far that they won't be likely to dig out under them. Now, you go and ask your pa if we can use a lot of fence poles from that pile he has over there. We'll sharpen them and drive them down as far as we can into the dirt, close together in a circle, and then we'll saw them off about three feet high and wire a roof of poles to the top of them; but, before we do that we'll pave the cage with a lot

of big flat stones. I reckon if we do that we'll have the bulge on these fellows, and they can't get away from us."

The plan was adopted. A circle was traced in the ground and the earth loosened all about its borders. Then a lot of fence poles were cut into four-foot lengths, sharpened at one end and driven firmly into the ground, close together about the circle. Next the boys brought flat stones from the prairie and made a neat pavement on the ground inside the cage. Other poles cut to a proper length were laid across the top of the cage and firmly wired down, all except the last two, which were left loose. The box containing the wolf pups was now brought up, the little fellows one by one were taken out of their sacks, their lashings cut, and they were dropped into the cage, and then the last two poles were placed in position and fastened. Several heavy sticks were laid across the roof to hold it down, so that the roof poles should remain firm, even though considerable force were exerted on them. They all drew back when the work was done, and eyed it with satisfaction, and for a time watched the four puppies within, restlessly trotting about the cage and constantly pushing their noses between the poles in the endeavour to squeeze out. Everything seemed to be firm, however, and they left the pups to their own devices.

"Seems to me there's one thing we've forgotten, Charley," said Hugh. "How are you going to feed and water them puppies? I did forget all about

that, didn't I? You can stick food in anywhere between the poles, but we'll have to take off part of the roof again and put a dish in for them to drink out of. When that is there it can be filled as often as they need it, from the outside." By the time this change had been made it was supper time, and all hands went to the house.

CHAPTER XVI

BIRDS AND THEIR NESTS

THE next day Hugh and Jack set out to return to the ranch. Before leaving, all hands went out and took a look at the wolf puppies. They seemed to be all right, but had evidently made some attempts to gnaw their way out, but their young teeth could not make much impression in the tough spruce sticks which formed their cage.

"After they get a little bigger," said Hugh to Charley, "unless they should grow tame, you will either have to drive more poles into the ground or else you'll have to kill the pups. They're so big now that I think it's pretty doubtful whether they ever get tame at all, and of course if they don't get tame, the only thing to do is to kill them. I've seen a heap of wolf and coyote puppies caught, but they've got to be mighty young ever to lose their wildness, and to get so that you can do anything with them. We'll have to leave our pup here until it gets a little older and we see whether they are likely to get tame or not."

They bade good-bye to the Powell family, with cordial thanks for all their kindness, and invitations

for them to come over to the ranch and visit them for a few days.

Jack said to Charley, "After awhile, when the elks' horns get big, and they get fat, come over with the waggon and we'll go out and kill two or three, and you can take back the meat with you. Hugh says we only have to go two or three miles from the house upon the mountain, to get all the elk we want."

On their way back they rode down the bluffs, not far from where Jack had killed the lion, and here, as they were going along, Jack suddenly saw, not far in front of him, a queer, dark grey object, shaped somewhat like a big tortoise, running along on the prairie in front of him. In a moment he recognised that it was a sage grouse, with wings partly extended and body held low, and for a moment he did not know what to make of the bird's action.

"Hold on, son," said Hugh, "there's where she started from ; " and he pointed to a low sage-bush a little to one side. "Get off your horse and go and look under that, and see what there is there." Jack did so, and saw a hollow in the ground, scantily lined with bits of grass, in which were thirteen greyish eggs, not so large as an ordinary hen's egg.

"Oh, Hugh !" he called back, "There are thirteen eggs ; can't we take them along ?" Hugh rode up to the spot, leading Jack's horse, and looked at the nest. "Well, now," he said, "seems to me I would not bother with that nest ; we've got a long way to go yet, and the chances are we'd smash the

eggs before we got home, and if we didn't do that, they'd be pretty sure to get cold, and wouldn't hatch. Let's leave that old hen alone, and some day we'll hunt up a nest right close to home, and get a setting of eggs there. 'Tain't no use to take these eggs without they're going to do us some good."

"Well, all right," said Jack, rather reluctantly, as he turned away. "We've got a long way to go, but do you suppose we'll be able to find another nest near the ranch?"

"I expect we will," was the answer; "though of course it isn't any sure thing; it's getting pretty late to find eggs now; we won't have any trouble finding young ones, though."

Jack mounted, and from the saddle looked about to try to see the old hen, but she had disappeared; so they went on.

The supper horn sounded that night just as they were riding up the valley, toward the house, and before they had unsaddled all hands were seated at the table. Before the meal was ended, Jack had to tell the story of his killing the lion, and of the death of the wolf; and after supper he brought in his roll of hides, and spread out both the lion and the wolf skin on the floor, so that all might see them. The men were loud in their congratulations, and Joe declared that he would have given a horse to have been in Jack's place. "You're in the biggest kind of luck, Jack," he said. "I've been riding the range right around here now for five years and I never

caught a glimps of a lion yet. I've helped to rope three bears, but of course that's no trick at all if you know your horse. I roped a cow elk once, and what's more, brought her into the ranch. I had better luck that time than old Vicente, down below here. He roped a bull elk, just on the edge of the rocky ground. His horse was small and the elk drug him a little way, and he got scared and turned his rope loose, and the elk went off up the mountain, dragging a twelve-dollar raw-hide rope behind him. But I'd have liked almighty well to have been along with you fellows, and had a chance to have a shot at that lion. You were sure in great luck."

"Well," said Jack, "I don't believe I'd have had a chance myself if it hadn't been for Pawnee; he ran just as hard as he could, and got away ahead of the other horses, and so I had the luck to get the shot."

"Well," said Joe, "you made the most of your chance, anyhow. Maybe it isn't every fellow that would have shot as straight as you did, if he'd had the chance to shoot at all."

Mr. Sturgis, too, had words of congratulation for Jack; but later in the evening he cautioned him not to let his excitement carry him into dangerous places. "You see, Jack," he said, "just as Hugh feels responsible to me for your safety, so I feel responsible to your father and mother. You might live out here for two or three years without ever getting close to a lion, but you managed to do it after you'd been here only a couple of months. The life here

is as safe as it is anywhere, but a man must use the same precautions against danger that he would in any other part of the world. He must use common sense, and not expose himself to the risk of being clawed by a lion, or run over by a team, or hurt by a fighting cow. You've been lucky enough so far, and have carried yourself well, but I want you to use as much discretion as you can."

"All right, Uncle Will," said Jack, "I'll try to remember what you and Hugh tell me. I confess that when I was galloping after the lion, or again after the wolf, I didn't think of a single thing except trying to get as close to the animal as I could; but when the lion jumped out of the tree at me, I was a little frightened. I didn't have time to be much frightened, because Pawnee jumped so quickly and took me out of the beast's way."

"What do you think, Uncle Will, about the wolf puppy that we left at Mr. Powell's," Jack went on. "Will it ever get tame? I should like to own a wolf that was as tame as a dog, and to take it back to New York with me. Wouldn't it make people stare! I don't believe half the people would believe it was a wolf."

"You'd better ask that question of Hugh," said his uncle; "he knows more about those things than I. I have never seen a tame wolf, myself, though I have heard of many of them; but I fancy that pups that are caught as old as he seemed to be do not ever really get tame. I do not believe that this wolf puppy will ever be of any particular use to you."

But if you are going to start the menagerie we talked of before we came out here, it is time you began. The antelope kids can be got now, and if I were you I would try to get two or three. Then there are some ducks' nests down by the lake that you might rob, and bring the eggs up to be hatched out at the house. There are two old hens out here now, I believe, that want to set, and you might try each of them with a lot of wild ducks' eggs. Rube found the nests day before yesterday, and I think would like to go down there and help you get them. In the course of two or three days the horse round-up will be here, and for a day or two we'll all be busy cutting out horses and branding colts. After that, Antonio is going to ride some wild horses, and I suppose you want to be here for that; so you had better get your ducks' eggs now, or the first thing you know they'll be swimming in the lake and you'll never get your hands on them."

"All right, Uncle Will," said Jack. "If Rube will go with me, we'll start right after breakfast to-morrow morning."

"Well," said his uncle, "you ask him to-morrow morning at breakfast. He'll go with you if he can."

After breakfast next morning, Rube and Jack went down to the lake, each carrying a small wooden box, partly filled with hay. The ducks' nests were easily found. One of them belonged to quite a small bird, which flew off close to the ground as the riders approached. They found that this nest contained nine roundish eggs, about the colour of

old ivory, that is yellowish white. The other nest, which was not far off, belonged to a larger bird, and in this there were eleven somewhat larger eggs. All the eggs from the first nest were placed in one box, and those from the second in another, and they returned to the house, riding very slowly and carefully, carrying the boxes in their hands, so that they should not be jarred or shaken. In the hen-house the two old hens were provided with good nests of clean hay, each in a barrel, which was covered at night so as to prevent anything from disturbing them, and one setting of eggs was put under each hen. Rube declared that he didn't feel quite safe about those hens, they were so big and the eggs were so small that he was afraid they would break them. "And if they don't break them," he said, "they're liable to step on the young ones when they hatch out, and kill half of them. Still, I suppose we've got to take that risk."

The morning had only half gone when the eggs were disposed of, and Jack looked about to see what else he could do. There was no one about the house except Mrs. Carter, who was sewing, and Rube, who had gone down to the stable and was working there. Jack threw himself on the grass just outside the house door, and lay there in the warm sun. For a while he did nothing except to think over the last few days, and remember what fun he had had. He determined that before night he would write a long letter to his father, telling him that he would rather not go back and go to

school and college, for he wanted to be a ranchman.

After a time he noticed some swallows circling about over the grass near him. They were very small and did not look like the swallows that he had seen back east, most of which have breasts about the colour of iron rust. These little fellows were wonderfully quick, so much so that sometimes it was hard for the eye to follow them. They made wide circles out over the grass, or again flew so close to the house that it seemed as if they must dash themselves against the logs. Suddenly, one of them flew squarely toward the house, but when he had almost reached it, turned upward and alighted on one of the roof poles, where he sat, twittering faintly, and occasionally arranging his feathers. Sometimes the little bird walked a few inches, turning himself this way and that, and then Jack could see that his back was almost the colour of a peacock's tail, shining green in some places, and shining purple in others. He felt sure that he could describe this bird well enough so that his uncle could tell him what it was. All at once, to his surprise, the swallow walked into a hole between two of the roof poles, and was not seen again, but a moment afterward another little bird, just like the first, except that its back was dull brown, walked out of the hole and flew away over the valley.

Jack did not know very much about birds, but he decided that this last one was the female, and that these two little swallows had a nest somewhere in

the roof. He determined too that he would watch them and see what they did every day, for they were so pretty and so quick and graceful that it was fun to look at them. About noon he saw his uncle and Hugh ride up to the barn and unsaddle, and before long he was asking about the swallows.

"Why yes," said his uncle, "those birds build there every year. They are a pair of violet green swallows; there are lots of them here in the mountains, and they build in little holes in the dead trees, or in the rocks; but these two have a nest somewhere up in the roof, every summer. I think it was last year that the young ones, when they were about full-grown, flew out of the nest and fell into the muslin that forms the ceiling of the sitting-room. They scrambled around there for nearly a whole day, and made so much noise that finally we cut a hole in the muslin and got them out. They were about as big as the old ones, and full feathered, and the next morning we took them out and put them on the roof, and the old ones at once fed them and began to teach them to fly. If you want to find out what birds there are about here, you had better take my bird book down from the shelf and study it a little each day. I can help you, for I know the names of most of the common birds." Saying this, his uncle went into the house.

"How are the calves, Hugh?" said Jack. "Have the coyotes been bothering them at all?"

"Not a bit," said Hugh; "they are all right, and big and strong. I expect in the course of a month

now your uncle will be bringing them over to the corals to brand, but we won't do that until after we've got through with the horses. The roundup ought to be along here most any time now, and when it gets here you'll see quite a lot of fun when we get to working them."

CHAPTER XVII

HUNTING ON THE MOUNTAIN

FOR several days the people at the ranch kept looking for the arrival of the horse roundup, but it did not come. One morning at breakfast Mr. Sturgis said to Hugh, "Well, Hugh, instead of sitting about here any longer, you might go up to-day on to the mountain and look around to find some good strong corral poles and posts. Some of the poles in the big corral are getting pretty weak, and as soon as the roundup has passed, we may as well make that corral over. Try to find poles that are easy got out, and of course as near home as you can; and if you get a chance, you might kill a heifer or a young bull, if you should see one."

"All right," said Hugh. "I'll be glad to take a little ride; I'm getting tired of sitting round waiting for them horses. Son," he continued, speaking to Jack, "do you want to go along?"

"Yes, indeed, Hugh, I'd like to first-class," was the reply.

After breakfast they started, and began to climb the mountain behind the house, following a steep trail which led up the side of a deep, narrow valley,

down which a large brook flowed. Jack had never ridden in this direction before, but he had often wondered what there was on top of the mountain, and he was glad to have a chance to go there. Pawnee followed close after old Baldy up the narrow trail, and not much was said by the riders, but Jack's eyes were busy looking at the rough mountain side and at the precipices of red rock that overhung the way. After some time they crossed a narrow side valley, where there was a little grass and underbrush and a few tall pines. As they were riding through this, Jack suddenly saw quite a large bird running along before them. It seemed to be hurt ; its wings were trailing on the ground, it ran half crouched down, and every now and then it would fall over on its side, and then recover itself and struggle along a little further.

"Oh, Hugh!" he called out, "see that bird! Wait a minute, I want to catch it."

Hugh stopped his horse, and Jack, jumping down, ran after the bird and almost put his hand on it. It just managed to struggle out of his fingers and ran along before him, tottering as if it were very feeble. He followed it for twenty or thirty yards further, not quite catching it, when suddenly, with a great whirr of wings, it rose from the ground and flew off up the mountain side. Jack stopped and watched it with open mouth, and then turned to go back to his horse. When he reached it Hugh said to him with a smile :

"Where's your bird?"

"That's the most mysterious thing I ever saw," said Jack. "I almost had that bird three or four times, and suddenly it flew off as if nothing was the matter with it."

"Well," said Hugh, "didn't you ever see that before? That's an old blue grouse, and her young ones are scattered around on the ground right where we're standing. She just pretended she was hurt to lead you away from them, and as soon as we are gone she will come back to them. You'd better look out where you put your foot down, or you might step on one. They're here right close, and yet we might look for half a day and not be able to find one of them."

"Well," said Jack, "that's curious. I think I have heard my uncle tell about birds doing that sort of thing, but I never saw it until to-day. That was a pretty big bird, but not as big as a sage hen, is it?"

"No," said Hugh, "they're quite a little bit smaller than a sage hen, and still they're lots bigger than a pheasant, and they're awful good eating, too."

Jack mounted and they rode on up the trail.

After quite a long scramble up the steep mountain trail they came to a rolling, grassy plateau, interrupted here and there by clumps of pines, and occasionally by great knobs of red granite rock. They rode for several miles over this upland without seeing anything that was interesting, until, as they were approaching one of these tall knobs

of rock, they heard a loud piercing whistle come from it.

Hugh stopped his horse, and when Jack rode up beside him, said :

"Now, let's watch them rocks for a little while, and see whether we can see that fellow."

"What fellow do you mean, Hugh," said Jack ; "the thing that made that noise?"

"Yes," said Hugh, "that's what some folks call a mountain marmot, but I call it a woodchuck, because it looks just like the woodchucks I used to see when I was a boy down in Kentucky, only it's considerable bigger, and it's got a kind of a yellow belly. It can make more noise for its size than most any beast I know of."

They sat there for a few moments and watched the rock about which the hot air was dancing, when suddenly Hugh said, "I believe I see him ; I think he just stuck his head out of that crack in the rock. Do you see there, near the top ? Follow that crack along with your eye and you'll notice a little grey knob that was not there a minute ago."

"Oh, I see it," said Jack.

"Well," said Hugh, "now watch that and see if it don't move."

After a few seconds the knob moved, and, in a minute an animal came out of the crevice in the rock and sat up.

"That would be a good shot," said Hugh, "if we had not come up here to try to hunt ; but your uncle wants us to try to kill him some meat, if we

can ; so we won't shoot at woodchuck. Let's ride on and when we get a little nearer to him he'll give one them whistles of his and then dodge into that crack in the rock."

It happened just as Hugh had said, and soon after they began to move forward, the animal gave another shrill whistle and again disappeared from view.

"There's quite a piece of burnt timber about a half mile off here to the north ; let's go over and look at that, and see if we can get the fence-poles that we need ; then we'll leave our horses and go afoot a little way, to see if we can see any elk."

They rode over to the timber which had been killed by fire some years before. Hugh spent some little time looking at it, but at length rode out into an open park, unsaddled his horse and tied its rope to a little tree, Jack doing the same. They took their rifles and started off along the edge of the timber on foot.

"I see some elk sign in this timber, and some of it is right fresh, but if you see any elk before I do, don't shoot. I don't want to kill any old cows now, because their calves are right young and they'd be liable to starve to death. If we can find a heifer we'll kill one ; she'll be in a pretty good order, and just what they want at the ranch." They had not gone far before Jack noticed in the dirt some tracks, and just as he was about to speak of them, Hugh stopped and said :

"Now, son, I want you to look at these tracks :

you see they look considerable like cattle tracks, but they ain't, they're elk. Now, look at this track here," he said, pointing to one of the largest, "that looks a good deal like the track of a two-year-old critter, but just see how long it steps; that will show you that it's an elk; the sign shows that it's a bull, but a young one. These other tracks you see here, they're cows and heifers and a yearling or two. Now, you see, these tracks are fresh; just notice how the dirt in each one seems kind of shining and polished. A big heavy animal putting its hoof down hard on the dirt makes the place where its weight rested look like that. Now, this track that I told you was a bull's, looks different; you can see that for yourself; it isn't polished but it looks kind of dull. The reason for that is that the wind has blown the dust about in the hoof mark and has partly covered it up. On dry ground like this an old track can always be told by that. Now, over there," he continued, pointing, "are some tracks made in the spring, when the ground was wet. Of course, you see that they sink in deep, as any tracks would that were made in the mud. It ain't much use for me to tell you about these things, except to make you notice quicker what the difference is in the different tracks you see. A man's got to study tracks a heap before ever he can become a good trailer. There isn't anything but experience that'll teach you what a track means, but often they tell a pretty plain story to a man who knows how to read them. It's wonderful to me to go out up in the

mountains when there's a fresh snow on the ground. You can see just what all the birds and animals have been doing since the snow fell; and often from the tracks you see you can tell just what they were thinking about."

"Yes, indeed, Hugh," said Jack, "Uncle Will has talked to me about that, and he told me, too, that you were the best trailer he'd ever seen. I want to keep my eyes open and try to learn from you as much as I can."

"Well," replied Hugh, "I have been learning for a good many years, and you can't expect to pick it all up in a few months. I'm mighty glad though to tell you all I know."

From here they went on, and soon, turning to the right, followed a narrow game trail which led along the top of a deep ravine, down which flowed a brook that they could hear splashing and bubbling among the rocks. They had not gone very far when a stick cracked down below them by the brook, and Hugh stopped and stood listening. He slipped a cartridge into his gun, and Jack imitated him, and then both crouched in the trail and listened. A moment later something was heard climbing the bank toward them, and Hugh, turning to Jack, whispered, "It's a bear. Get ready." Jack cocked his gun and looked with all his eyes, and presently, not twenty yards below, he saw a brown animal step out of the bushes. "Shoot," said Hugh; and Jack, aiming at the point of the bear's shoulder, fired. The animal dropped and rolled out of sight among

the bushes; but in a moment he re-appeared, galloping toward them. "Shoot," said Hugh again, and Jack threw the rifle to his shoulder and fired, but the bear kept on. "Shoot again," said Hugh; "carefully, this time." And again Jack aimed at the bear, now not ten yards from them, and fired. This time the animal doubled up and rolled down the hill again, but before it reached the fringe of bushes its motion stopped and it lay stretched out in the sunlight.

"Good boy," said Hugh, "I believe you missed him with your second shot, but the third one was all right. Did you feel like running?"

"No," said Jack, "I don't believe I did. I was too busy shoving cartridges into my rifle, and trying to hit the right spot, to think about anything else. But was he charging us, Hugh?"

"No," said Hugh, "I don't expect he was. You see, he hadn't no idea that we were 'round until your first shot hit him, and he didn't know where that came from, and was just trying to get away. He happened to run in our direction, that was all. I don't think he wanted to be mean. Well, you've killed your first bear, son, and you're surely getting to be a real old hunter. You take to it in the right way, and I'm right glad you do. If you and me could travel together for a year or two, I'd guarantee to make a hunter of you. Well now, let's go down and skin that little fellow."

They found the bear quite dead and with only two bullet holes in his hide. The first one showed

that Jack's first shot had been a bad one; he had fired at the point of the bear's shoulder, but had hit it in the top of the head, just grazing the skull. There was nothing to show where the second shot had gone, but the third one had pierced his chest and had gone lengthwise through his body.

"There," said Hugh, "you see what I told you; that first shot gave him a rap on the head and sort o' stunned and dazed him, and I don't believe he knew which way he was running. I suppose you'd like to take off his hide, because he's the first bear you've ever killed, but it ain't in very good order. You see, he's partly shed off, and what's left of his old winter coat is all sunburned. Still, we may as well skin him. You can use the hide for a while, and then, if you like you can cut off his front paws, just to keep the long claws. You see, he's a little fellow, just about the size of the one your uncle killed that day we came out from town."

Jack helped to skin the bear, and found that it was hard, slow work.

"Yes," said Hugh, to whom he spoke of this, "skinning a bear is some like skinning a beaver; you can't strip the hide at all, you've got to cut every inch."

After the hide had been removed they carried it up to the trail and made a bundle of it, and then, going down to the brook, washed the blood from their hands, and Hugh sat down and smoked. As they sat there Jack noticed two or three birds fly down toward where the bear lay, and then two or

three more. He asked Hugh what these were, but Hugh had not seen them. He proposed that they should go up to the trail where the bear-skin lay, and from which they could see the carcass and the birds that visited it. They climbed the bank and were hardly seated on the trail when a small grey bird pitched down out of a pine tree on to the carcass, and began to peck at the meat. It was at once followed by two or three others.

“Now, those birds,” said Hugh, “are what I call meat hawks; some calls them camp robbers. I expect they’re a kind of a winter bird, anyhow there’s lots of them ’round in winter; they’re the tamest creatures you ever see. I’ve seen it sometimes when I was skinning a deer, hung up, that they’d ’light on the legs of the deer and peck at the meat, and sometimes they’d flutter right down to the ground at my feet and eat the scraps that fell from my knife. They’re dreadful easy caught, too, if anybody was to take the trouble, and when you catch ’em they don’t seem a mite scared, but just peck and fight and claw you as if they were as big as you are. There, that one,” he continued, as a large dark brown bird with a beautiful long crest flew down to the carcass, “is a kind of a blue jay, I reckon. Anyway, he looks some like the blue jays I used to see back in the States when I was a boy, except that he’s kind of brownish blue instead of being light blue. Those camp robbers are afraid of him, and they leave until he gets through, but if a magpie comes along, then the blue jay leaves, and

of course if a raven or an eagle comes, the magpie has to do the waiting." Just as he spoke, a queer, chippering noise was heard in one of the pines, and two beautiful magpies, with glossy black heads and tails and white under parts, came to the ground, and after hopping gracefully about for a moment or two, began to feed on the carcass.

"Well," said Hugh, "we might stop here all day, watching these birds, but we'd better be moving. We'll go back to the horses another way, and, as I've got to pack this bear hide, you'll have to kill an elk, if we see any."

Their way back was through beautiful green timber, free from underbrush, the ground being covered with a soft black mould of decaying pine needles. They had been walking briskly for some little time, and Jack thought they must be getting near the horses, when suddenly Hugh stopped and said; "Son, look around you and see whether you see anything."

Jack thought there must be something special to see, and looked carefully about. He could see only the green pines, their grey trunks, and the black earth, sometimes brightened by shafts of sunlight which came through openings in the green canopy above them. After a minute he said, "No, Hugh, I don't see anything."

"Well," said Hugh, "there's something to see, and I expect it's something that you never saw before. Let's go on a little way."

He stepped forward, turning a little to his right,

and walked up to the foot of a large tree, where Jack had noticed a patch of sunlight; but when they got to the foot of the tree, to his astonishment and delight, the boy saw lying there a little bright red, white spotted animal, which he knew must be a calf elk. It looked a good deal like a very young fawn, but was three or four times as large. Jack was on his knees beside it in a moment, patting it and smoothing its skin, and declaring it was the prettiest thing he had ever seen. It lay there absolutely without motion, and as he lifted its legs one by one, and let them go again, they dropped back limp as if the animal were dead.

"Well, son, I don't know what we're going to do with this calf," said Hugh; "it's most too big for you to carry, and I can't pack both the calf and the bear hide. Do you want to take it with you or to leave it here?"

"Oh, Hugh," said Jack, "let's take it along; I think I can carry it, and we can't be very far from the horses now."

"No," said Hugh, "we ain't. I guess we'll manage to pack it to them, then it will be easy to get it down the hill. Do you think you could carry it? Take it right across your shoulders, holding the fore legs in one hand and the hind legs in the other. I'll lift it up for you, but I reckon it's too heavy for you to pack far."

Jack took the calf on his back, but, as Hugh had said, it was pretty heavy, and before long he had to put it down. Hugh left him there, watching the

calf and the bear-skin, went on to where the horses were and brought them back. From behind his saddle he took a gunny sack, in which he put the calf, cutting a hole in the side through which its head protruded, and then tying the sack in front of Jack's saddle, and putting the bear-skin behind his own, they started for the house. When they came out on the trail where they could overlook the valley, they saw near the ranch a great herd of animals, and Hugh said, "Well, there's the horse roundup at last. Now we'll have plenty of work for the next few days, cutting out these horses and branding our own colts."

CHAPTER XVIII

WITH THE HORSE ROUNDUP

WHEN Hugh and Jack reached the house, after putting the young elk in a calf-pen in the stable, they found a number of strangers there, and all the corrals seemed to be overflowing with horses. In one some men were still working, but when the supper horn sounded all hands came to the house.

The supper table that night was longer than it had been since Jack had been at the ranch. There were nine strange cowboys there, all of whom, however, seemed to be well acquainted with Mr. Sturgis and Hugh and Rube and Joe. Still, they were not very talkative at supper, but after it was over and they were sitting about outside the house, smoking, many stories were told of the daily happenings of the last two or three weeks while they had been gathering the horses. Jack would have enjoyed sitting about to listen to this talk, but when Hugh suggested that they should go down to the corrals and walk through the horses, he readily accompanied him. In the first pen that they entered the horses stood crowded so close together that it looked at first as if they could not push their way through them, but as they

went on, the animals crowded to one side and made a narrow lane through which they could walk. Two months before, when Jack had first come to the ranch, it would have made him nervous to be so close to the heads and heels of these wild horses, but now he scarcely thought of it. Hugh looked the horses over and talked about them with the enthusiasm of a real horseman. He pointed out the beauties of this one and that, and called attention to one colt after another, telling which mare was its mother, and having some little story about each one.

One of the corrals seemed to be occupied chiefly by mares and colts, with some young horses, and of these a number of the mares seemed to recognise Hugh, and pushed their way up to him, reaching out their noses to be patted, and sometimes thrusting their heads over his shoulder. He explained to Jack that these were old horses that had been long on the place, and were accustomed to being brought up and held in the corral, where they were gentled and petted a little, and that they seemed not to forget this, and were always willing to make friends whenever they were brought up. He said, too, that their foals and yearlings and two and three-year olds, which often all followed the mother, themselves grew gentle and liked to be noticed by the men, and that, of course, animals that were tame were much more easily handled and broken to saddle or to harness than the wild colts that had been running on the range all their lives.

Two or three of the yearlings in this corral were

cripples, with twisted, misshapen limbs, and Jack asked Hugh whether these would ever recover, and if not, what they were good for.

"No," said Hugh, "they won't never get well, and they ain't worth nothing. It's a shame to use colts so that they break down like that. That comes of running a little young colt hard for twenty-five or thirty miles on the roundup. Of course these little fellows after they get some strength can travel pretty nearly as well as an old horse, but if you run them too far or too fast in bringing in the horses, their soft, gristly little bones get bent and twisted, and they don't ever get straight again. There's a heap of good foals ruined every year, just because a lot of fool cow punchers want to get a bunch of horses into the corral in an hour and a half, when by rights they ought to take three hours to do it in. All them crippled yearlings ought to be killed, they're no good now, and they'll never be any better than they are. They just eat the grass that might support a good horse."

After an hour or two in the corrals, as it began to grow dark, Hugh and Jack went back toward the house. On the way Jack stopped in at the hen-house to look at his setting hens and put the covers on the barrels in which their nests were. As he was doing this he heard from beneath one of the hens a faint, peeping sound, and lifting up one wing he saw beneath it the tiniest little duckling that he had ever seen. It was too dark to see much, and he had to leave the hen-house without finding how many

of his eggs had hatched, but he made up his mind that the next morning, no matter what happened, he must prepare a coop for this brood of ducks. When they reached the house they found that a number of the tired cowboys were already rolled up in their blankets, and sleeping. There were four in the bunk-house, three on the floor of the dining-room, and the others were just taking their blankets over to the barn, to sleep in the soft, sweet-smelling hay. Hugh said to Jack, "You'd better turn in, too, son; to-morrow will begin pretty early in the morning, and you won't have any too much time to sleep if you go to bed now."

It was not yet light next morning when Jack heard the bustle which announced that all hands were astir, and he at once got up and dressed, to find himself only just in time for breakfast. It was plain daylight by the time the meal was over, and most of the men at once went down to the corrals. Jack hurried down to the hen-house, but, on looking at his ducks' eggs, found that only a part of one setting had hatched, and putting a little food near the hen's nest, he left them, determining to postpone the building of his coop until the following day. He went on down to the corral and found that the men were busy turning out the horses on to the prairie, where they were to be herded by two riders. Some of the men had brought wood to the big round corral, and just outside it, and close to the fence, some were kindling fires, while others were chopping poles and logs into wood small

enough to be used on these fires. A great lot of iron bars, four or five feet long, stood against the corral fence, and on looking closely at these, Jack saw that each had a handle on one end and an iron letter on the other. These, he supposed, must be the branding irons, and these fires were for heating them.

After a time most of the horses had been turned out, but a large number, almost all of them old mares, with their colts, had been cut out and confined in a series of pens that were connected by a gate with the round corral, outside which the fires were burning. By the time these were going well, and the various branding irons had been put in them to heat, three or four of the men drove into the big corral a bunch of thirty or forty mares, whose little colts stayed close by their sides. Many of these mares seemed quite wild, and all raced around the walls of the pen, as if very much frightened. It seemed to Jack as if these little colts, some of which hardly looked bigger than jack rabbits, must all be killed by being stepped on. Yet each colt kept close to its own mother's side, and a little bit under her, so that it was well protected from being harmed by any other mare that crowded close upon it.

Two or three men with ropes now entered the corral and, as the horses ran about them, each one threw his rope over a colt, and as soon as the rope caught a colt's neck, a couple of men quickly dragged it out into the middle of the corral, and taking hold

of it, threw it down, holding it so that it should not injure itself in its struggles; then one of the men ran to the fence and called for a particular iron, bearing the brand which showed on the mother of the colt. When this was given him he ran back to where the colt lay and carefully pressed it on its shoulder or neck or hip, and held it there. The hair and skin hissed under the hot iron, a little smoke arose, the colt tried to struggle, and then, after the brand had been properly placed, it was allowed to spring to its feet and to run back to the bunch. Meantime, its mother had been whinnying, calling, and sometimes running out from the circle of the horses, almost up to the men who were holding down her colt. When it was freed and ran back to her, she nosed it all over and then contentedly took her place with the other old mares.

The work of branding went on rapidly. Now and then some man would catch a colt with too large a loop, the little animal's head and forequarters would pass through it and it would be caught around the body. When held in this way it was of course much harder to handle than when caught by the neck, and before the men got their hands on it, it would go through a series of extraordinary antics, rearing, plunging, bucking and dancing; but at last it would be caught, thrown down and treated like the others. A man who caught a colt in this fashion was much laughed at by the other cowboys and advised to take lessons in roping. As soon as

all the colts in the corral had been branded, the horses there were turned out and a fresh lot of mares and colts brought in. All through the morning this went on. Jack, though at first he sat on the top rail of the corral and watched, was soon called down from his lofty perch and set to work. For some time he passed the hot irons in to the men who were doing the branding, then he was sent to get more wood, and afterwards for a bucket of water. The cowboys were all good-natured and very friendly with him, and chaffed him as he ran here and there, trying to carry out their orders.

After dinner the work continued, and one thing happened that made Jack feel badly. A little colt, frightened at something, had run a few steps in front of its mother, as all the horses were racing about the pen, and just as the rope caught its neck, it stopped. The mother, lumbering along behind it, tripped over the tightened rope and fell on the colt, and when it got up one of its fore-legs swung loose.

"There's a dead colt," said one of the men, and in a minute they caught it and threw it down.

Then one of the older men took the hurt leg and moved it backward and forward, while he held his ear close to the animal's shoulder.

"Yes," he said, "its shoulder is smashed, I can hear the bones grate. Hand me that hatchet, Jim."

The hatchet was passed to him, and he struck the little colt twice with it in the head, and two of the

men carried the carcass to the fence and passed it through. Jack did not understand this, which had happened so quickly, and asked Hugh, who happened to be standing near him, why they killed the colt.

"Why," said Hugh, "when the mare fell on it she broke its shoulder, and it couldn't never have got well, in fact, it couldn't even have followed its mother around, it would just have had to suffer for a few days and then die ; so of course it was better to kill it now."

"What a pity!" said Jack, as he looked at the pretty little animal lying at his feet, whose eyes were already glazing. "Wasn't there any way to have cured it?"

"No," said Hugh, "I expect not, and it would have cost more to try to cure it than it could ever have been worth ; I expect it was better to kill it off right now."

When supper time had come that night, all the colts had been branded, and orders were given that after Mr. Sturgis's horses had been cut out of the bunch, next morning, the roundup should move on.

After supper that night, Jack sat down near three or four of the cowboys who were smoking their pipes and cigarettes by the corner of the house, and listened to their talk. One of them seemed to be telling a story.

"I tell you," he said, "it was about the funniest thing I ever saw. You see, we'd run the bear may be a mile and a half, and two or three of us had put

our ropes on him, but he always managed to slip out. It was a pretty hot day, and his tongue was hangin' out about a yard, and toward the end he was pretty mad, and when we got close, he'd turn round and charge back on us. One time when he did this he passed pretty close to Mat, who was on a slow horse, and Mat managed to catch him by the hind leg, and the rope stayed ; but when Mat tried to hold him, the bear turned round and charged, and Mat got kind o' scared, and just turned the rope loose from his saddle and ran, and the bear went on. Well, pretty quick, we came to a little pile of rocks, with three or four cedars growing around them, and the bear stopped at these rocks and wouldn't run no further. We run up pretty close to him and tried to rope him, but he was sort o' half under the rocks and we couldn't catch him. He had Mat's rope on his hind leg yet, and it was lying out on the prairie, and we commenced to make fun of Mat, and to tell him to ride in there and pick up his rope and drag the bear out, but of course we didn't expect he'd try to do no such fool thing as that, but we kept on making fun of him, and the first thing we knew he started to ride by the bear and pick up his rope. When he got right close, just as he was goin' to stoop for the rope, there comes the bear sailing out after him, and lookin' mighty savage, I tell ye. He turned his old horse and run, and the bear run, and when he looked around and saw the bear not very far off, he rode his horse under one of them cedar trees, and just reached up

and caught hold of a branch and curled up over it, and his horse ran on, and he went climbing on toward the top of the tree. We just set there on our horses and laughed at Mat, so long and so hard that the bear ran on and went plumb out of the country, carrying Mat's rope, and we never see him again."

Soon after the sun rose next morning Mr. Sturgis's horses were being cut out of the bunch and turned into one of the big corrals, and by ten o'clock the horse roundup had started on its way again, and all the strangers with it.

That afternoon Hugh and Jack busied themselves making a pen for the little ducks, all of which had now hatched out. Each of the old hens was put in a coop, which stood at opposite corners of the pen, and boards standing on their sides made a fence and prevented the newly hatched birds from wandering away, yet gave them a little space of grass, over which they could walk and feed. Jack had never seen such little bits of ducklings as some of these were, and Hugh told him that he thought they must be teal. After the pen was finished he spent some little time catching small grasshoppers, which he threw to the birds, and it was comical to see the excitement which they showed and the way in which they fought over this food.

They also gave a lesson to the little calf elk. Up to this time it had paid no attention to them, but had wandered about its pen with slow steps, constantly looking for a place to get out. Now, however, when Jack reached his hand over to pat it, it

caught the sleeve of his shirt in its mouth and chewed it a little, and when he put his hand near to its nose, it tried to take the whole hand into its mouth.

"Oh," said Hugh, "that fellow's getting hungry; he's about ready to drink now. Put your fingers in his mouth and I'll go and get some milk and we'll teach him how to drink."

Hugh went up to the house, and soon returned with a small pail, holding about a pint of warm milk. "Now," he said to Jack, "get inside the pen and hold the can in your left hand, and then lower the hand he's sucking until it's in the milk, so that he'll draw some milk into his mouth when he sucks." Jack did so, and as soon as the calf began to taste the milk it showed quite a little excitement, shaking its body and pushing with its head against the can, and pretty soon it pushed so hard that it almost knocked the can out of Jack's hand, and spilt most of the milk. He kept up the work until the calf had drunk all the milk in the pail, but it was not nearly satisfied, and bawled after Jack as he went out of the barn.

"Now," said Hugh, "we must give it another drink before supper, and then another just before dark. Just as soon as we can learn it to drink it will be perfectly tame, and you can turn it out to wander around the house. You'll have to watch it, though, for if it goes off a little way from the house the coyotes are liable to catch it. Fact is, I think we'd better make a little corral for it, out in the

brush, and leave it out there days where it can get plenty of sunlight and learn how to pick grass a little, and then shut it up here every night where it will be safe. It will be tame though, from now on."

As they were going up to the house, Hugh said, "Well, I expect you'll be ready to see Tony go at the broncs to-morrow morning. I heard your uncle say we'd start in the first thing in the morning."

"Yes, indeed, Hugh," said Jack, "that's something I want very much to see, and I expect to have a lot of fun. Do you suppose any of those wild horses will throw Tony?"

"It's hard to say," replied Hugh; "he's an awful good rider, and I don't expect he gets thrown very often, but every man that follows bronco busting is liable to get thrown and killed every time he gets on a wild horse. I've ridden plenty of wild horses in my time, but I don't ride no more. It's boy's work, that's what it is."

"I am going up to take another look at the little ducks, Hugh," said Jack; and he went on toward the pen. In a minute Hugh heard his name called loudly, and went on up toward the duck pen.

"Oh, Hugh," said Jack, as he drew near, "something's killed three of those littlest ducks already, and here is blood on the top of one of the coops. What can it be?"

Hugh looked about and apparently saw no sign, but in a moment he lifted his finger to call Jack's attention, and stood listening. Jack heard faintly

a bird's call, which sounded familiar, but at first he could not think where he had heard it.

"That's what it is," said Hugh; "them durned magpies have found these ducks, and now they'll kill them all, unless we kill them. You stop here a minute or two while I go to the house and get your uncle's shot-gun and your rifle, and we'll see if we can't ambush them fellows."

Jack felt very badly as he stood there waiting; three of these dear little ducks had gone in an hour; at this rate they would not last very long. Presently Hugh came back with the gun, and, giving Jack his rifle, he loaded the shot gun, and they sat down in the bushes not far from the pen.

"Now," said Hugh, "them magpies will be back pretty quick, and we'll have to lie here right quiet. If you get a chance at one sitting on a branch, kill him, and I'll try to take any others that may be there, as they fly away. There may be only one or two of them, and if we kill them and hang them up around the pen, that'll likely scare off any other, that may come."

They had not been waiting more than a few moments before they heard the magpies calling not far off, and presently one, almost at once followed by two others, appeared in the branches of one of the aspens close to the ducks' pen. They peered down at it curiously, and Jack, seizing a moment when one of them stood still, fired, and the bird dropped. The other two rose in the air, but Hugh, standing up, shot first one and then the

other, and both fell into the bushes. Hugh got three long sticks and, sharpening an end of each, stuck them in the ground about the pen, and to each one tied one of the dead magpies, which swung to and fro in the breeze, and would be likely to act as scarecrows to any others that might come.

CHAPTER XIX

BUSTING BRONCOS

AFTER breakfast next morning, Jack hurried down to the corrals and climbed up on the fence, whence he could see all that was going on. Crowded in one corner of the large corral stood the horses, most of them with heads down and dull and sleepy looks. Rube and Joe were in the stables, saddling the ponies that they were to ride, and as Mr. Sturgis and Hugh came down from the house, the two boys led their horses up near the gate of the smaller round corral and tied them to the fence. Soon all the men entered the round corral, the gate between that and the large corral was opened and two of the men went toward one end of the bunch of horses. A wild bay colt started to run away from them, and the other horses tried to follow it, but Rube ran forward, headed them off and turned them back, so that all except the bay remained huddled in the corner. This one trotted swiftly along close to the corral fence until he reached the open gate leading into the smaller corral. He turned into that and the men ran forward, passed through and shut the

gate. The bay horse trotted swiftly several times about the corral and made a pretty picture. He held his head high and his ears forward; his neck was arched, his coat shone in the sun and his long black tail was spread out behind him, and almost swept the ground. He was a real beauty. Suddenly Joe stepped forward with a rope in his hand and swung the loop about his head, and as he did so the horse, frightened, broke into a gallop. In a moment the loop of the rope flew out, not toward the horse's head, as Jack had expected, but toward the ground in front of it. Joe's hand was thrown up in the air and in a moment the young horse was standing on his hind legs pawing the air with fore feet, which were held together by the rope, while Joe, and in a moment Hugh and Rube, were pulling back on it with all their might. It had all happened so quickly that Jack did not at all understand how it had been done.

If the young horse had been frightened before, he was terrified now. In vain he strove to free himself from this rope which was gripping his fore feet and holding them tightly together. He reared again and again on his hind legs, walking on them and striking with his forefeet; then he came down on all fours and tried to run, but still he was held fast. For a moment or two he flew about with his head toward the men, but at length he turned his side toward them, and as they pulled on the rope, he lost his balance and fell heavily on the soft dust which covered the ground. The men kept the rope

taut, and Rube, letting go, ran swiftly to the animal's head and sat on it. The others ran around to the horse's feet, pulled back the front ones, cast a loop of the rope around the hind ones and drew them forward, and in a moment all four feet were tied together, and the men, breathing a little quickly from the exertion, stood back and looked at him.

"He's a nice one," said Hugh.

"Yes," said Rube, "he's a good 'un. He'll make you hunt timber, Tony, you bet."

"Maybe ;" said Antonio, who had just come from the stable carrying on one arm his saddle, blanket, hackamore and quirt. He wore his spurs and about each thigh was tied a buckskin wrapper which enveloped the whole leg above the knee. The horse, after some ineffectual struggles, lay still, breathing heavily, and with the sweat starting from his skin.

Jack had by this time jumped down from the fence and approached the group of men.

"Keep behind him, son, and near his head ; then he can't kick you, even if he does get his feet free," said Hugh.

"Why does Rube sit on his head, Hugh?" asked Jack.

"So's to keep him from getting up," was the reply. "Don't you know that if a horse is lying on his side, he can't get up unless he raises his head first. So when you throw a horse, if you don't want him to get up, just sit on his head."

While they were talking, Joe had spread the hackamore, and in a moment the horse's head had been

lifted from the ground and the hackamore slipped over it. Then the blind—a strip of black leather—was tied to the cheek pieces of the hackamore on each side, completely covering the horse's eyes.

“Turn him loose now, boys, and let him get up,” said Mr. Sturgis, “and we'll see if we can get him out of the gate.”

The rope was quickly cast off the feet, and another put around the neck, and the horse, as soon as he felt that he was free, stood up, but as the blind entirely covered his eyes, he could see nothing and stood perfectly still. For a few moments Antonio worked about him, first going to his head and taking his muzzle in both hands while he breathed several times into the horse's nostrils, then patting him and smoothing his skin on neck, shoulders, and body on both sides. At first the horse flinched each time the man's hand touched him, but as Antonio spoke soothingly to him, and he found that he was not hurt, he seemed to grow used to the handling and to be less frightened.

Then Antonio said: “Pretty quick I goin' raise blind. Maybe you lead him out gate.”

With more soothing words he worked around to the horse's head, shoved him about so that his head was toward the gate, and pushed the blind up a little so that the animal could see the ground at his feet. One of the boys slapped the horse's quarters with a rope and it made a plunge or two forward, which carried it through the gate, where it stood still again, and Antonio pushed down the blind, looking

carefully at it to see that the animal's eyes were entirely covered.

"Why doesn't he move when his eyes are covered, Hugh?" said Jack. "I know he can't see, but I should think he would kick and plunge even if he did nothing else."

"Well now, son," said Hugh slowly, "I want you to think a little bit and see if you can't answer that question yourself. Of course you don't know much about this country or its ways, but I shouldn't think you would have to ask that question. Just you think about it till we git this horse started, and then I'll talk to you about it."

Meantime Antonio had again been patting the horse, and at length had taken his saddle blanket and held it under the horse's nose so that he might smell it. Then he rubbed the blanket along the neck on both sides, on the withers and flanks, laid it over the neck and pushed it down on the back. The horse flinched and snorted whenever the blanket touched him in a new place, but seemed quickly to lose his fear and stood still. Soon Antonio began to whip the horse with the blanket all over. Then he folded the blanket and tossed it lightly on the horse's back. The animal flinched again with a sidewise motion and groaned, but Antonio patted it, and the blanket remained there. One of the boys went to the off side and held the blanket in place, and in a moment Antonio came up with the saddle, which he placed on the blanket, the man on the off side letting down the stirrup and the

cinch gently, so as to frighten the horse as little as possible. Antonio cautiously reached under the belly, caught the cinch, and, passing the latigo through the rings, by a slow pull drew it tightly against the belly. As the horse felt the relentless tightening of the broad band it squealed in fright and kicked viciously at first with both hind feet and then with each separately, but its fore feet did not leave the ground.

“Goin’ to tie the stirrups, Tony?” said Joe.

“No, dees hawse quiet. You see;” was the reply, as Antonio gathered up the reins of the hackamore and put his foot in the stirrup. He raised himself slowly until his full weight rested on it, and though at first the horse yielded he made no move, and the rider threw his leg over the saddle and settled himself firmly in the seat. Joe and Rube ran to their horses and mounted and took a position on either side and a little behind Antonio, and so close to him that they could reach his horse with their whips. Then Antonio reached slowly forward on either side the bay colt’s head, pushed up the blind, sat back in the saddle and, with a wild yell, brought down the quirt on the horse’s flank. The yell was echoed by the hazers on either side, and they plied their quirts. The horse, blinded and confused by the sudden light, the noise and the pain, gave a few wild plunges, and then he realised that the first thing he must do was to get rid of the terrible weight that was bearing him down and crushing in his sides. He lowered his head, arched his back, and putting his feet to

gether began to shoot into the air and come down stiff legged. At this the yells and the whipping of the hazers increased, and the group of onlookers by the corral shouted laughter and cheers for horse and man. The bucking lasted only for a short time, and soon the horse, forced to it by the quirting, started off in a swift run over the prairie. The hazers followed him for half a mile, to see that he was going well, and then, stopping on a little hill, continued to watch him. Meantime, Mr. Sturgis, Jack and Hugh went into the corral again, cut out another horse and put it in the round corral. Then Jack, and Hugh went outside and sat on the ground in the sun, with their backs against the corral fence, and Hugh filled his pipe and smoked. When Hugh's pipe was going, Jack said:

"Now, Hugh, I wish you'd tell me why the horse stands still when he's blindfolded. He didn't stand quite still all the time though, for he kicked like the mischief when they were saddling him, and how he jumped when Antonio pushed the blind off."

"Well now, son, ain't you thought that out yet?" replied Hugh. "I expect I'll have to tell you then. It's so that the colt kicked when he felt the cinch gripping him, but you took notice, I expect, that his front feet never left the ground. He didn't move out of his tracks, even if he did let out with his heels."

"Now, I want you to listen to what I have to say, and think about it, for it may help you some time to see for yourself other things that seem blind, and

save you asking questions that might make people think you didn't know nothing. Now, here's this yer horse," he continued, waving his pipe toward the prairie, "he's a four-year-old, as I told you, born and raised on the prairie, likely never had a rope on more'n once in his life, maybe driven up here once a year with the roundup. But all his life he's been running free; he's wild. All his life he's depended on his eyes and nose to tell him what's dangerous, and on his legs to take him away from it. All this time he's been able to use these things. There never was a night so dark that he couldn't use 'em all. Now, all of a sudden his legs are tied up so he can't run, a hackamore is put round his nose so he can't hardly smell nor breathe, and his eyes are shut up so it's all black to him; he can't see nothing. He's so scared that he don't know what to do. Even when his legs is free he still can't see nothing, and he knows he can't travel without his eyes; he's had falls enough when he was a colt to know that a horse needs eyes to run with. So it is that he stands still. It's the same with an old horse. If you want to put anything on him that he don't like to carry, just blind him, and he'll stand still till the blind's taken off."

"I never thought of that, Hugh, that a horse can see in the dark, but the dark even of a dark night must be very different from a blind."

"It sure is," replied Hugh. "Hello, there comes Tony and the horse; mighty quiet too."

The horse as it drew near was seen to be white

with lather on its breast and neck, and dripping with sweat over its whole body. It trotted along slowly and the fight was all gone out of it. Every now and then it would bore with its head, or would try to turn off to one side, but the firm hand of the rider always brought its head around again, and it trotted on toward the corral. Arrived there, Antonio reached forward and pulled the blind down over its eyes, and then springing from the saddle, began to take it off. One of the boys put a rope about the horse's neck and then pulled the long hair of the tail out, to show that it had been ridden, and it was led to the big corral and turned loose with the wild horses.

The boys joked Antonio about the horse, but he only smiled and answered that the horse was too gentle.

This could not be said of the next one, however, a big iron-grey, which fought from the moment it felt the rope on its forefeet. It was quiet while it was being saddled, but as soon as the blind was raised, it went into a perfect fury of squealing, bucking, kicking, and fighting. None of this stirred Antonio from his seat, but two or three times the animal reared up so straight that those who were watching involuntarily called, "Look out," and saw the rider grasp the saddle horn and loosen one foot from the stirrup, prepared to slip off if the horse fell over backward. At length, however, urged on by the hazers, it started off and ran half a mile and then stopping short, again began to buck furiously, but

soon started on again and disappeared over the hills, the hazers close behind.

It was a long time before Antonio returned, with the boys still riding behind him, and horse and man both seemed tired by the fierce battle that they had been through, but, though exhausted by the struggle, the horse's eye rolled fiercely, while the rider's face was stern and set and his hand firm as he guided the big grey up to the corral gate.

"Well, Tony," called out Hugh, "that's a hard one. He'll need a heap of riding yet, before he's right gentle."

"Yes, sir," was the reply, "he big strong hawse; shake me pretty hard when he comin' down; pitch all different ways. Maybe some time he get me off."

The next horse was a contrast to both the others. After he had been blinded and untied, he would not stand up until he had been hit hard with the rope, and after being saddled and mounted he would not move, and when quirted he just stood still and grunted. After ten minutes of vain effort to start him, Antonio declared that he had never before seen a horse like this one, and that it was fit only for a pack horse. The animal was unsaddled and taken to another corral, where a pack saddle was cinched on him, and he was left to spend the day there alone.

All through the day the work of breaking went on, and all day Jack sat on the corral bars and watched it, and at night when supper time came,

Antonio acknowledged to Jack, who asked him the question, that he was pretty tired.

"It's hard work," said Hugh, "almighty hard, and slow. It's slower here than most places, but we get a heap better horses, breaking 'em this way—kinder gentling 'em the way you saw before we put the saddle on. Ef there was time to do it, and there wan't so many horses, they'd all ought to be gentled from colts up. No trouble to break 'em that way, and never no horses spoiled like they is this way. Now you take that grey this morning; ef he ain't handled just so, he's going to be a regular devil. But Tony here is an awful good rider, and he's got a good disposition too, and I reckon he'll bring the grey through all right."

The work of gentling the horses went on day after day for a week or more, and Jack never wearied of watching the work. The patience shown by Antonio in handling the horses surprised him, for he had noticed that Joe and Rube sometimes got angry at the horses they rode, and swore at them and lashed them with their ropes. He asked his uncle why there was such a difference.

"I always thought Mexicans got angry easily, but Tony never seems to. I should think sometimes he'd get mad."

"Tony has good judgment," said his uncle, "and that's the reason I have him ride these colts. It is very easy to spoil any horse by fighting with him, and if he comes to look on a man as his enemy, he will never be worth much. I have these horses

broken as gently as I can, and I find that people are willing to pay me more for a saddle horse than they pay people who just break their horses any way at all. It is profitable to use care in breaking horses."

CHAPTER XX

A TRIP TO SMITH'S HOLE

SOME weeks passed. The work of the ranch went on. Jack was now becoming a useful member of the society there, for he had come to feel so much at home that there were many things that he could do about the place. Every day he gained more confidence in himself and it was no longer thought necessary that he should have some one with him when he rode out away from the ranch on the prairie. One night his uncle had suggested that he should go out and bring in the milk cows, and he did so, and after this it became his regular duty to look for them, if they did not come up to the corral to be milked at night. A little later Joe had asked him one morning to go out and bring in the saddle horses, which were feeding high up in the mountain, but could be seen from the house. He did so, and after a few days this became a part of his regular work. For such riding as this he did not use Pawnee, but rode, instead, old Grey, or the Pilot, or any one of three or four other gentle horses that were always close about the ranch. He remembered Hugh's advice, given to him soon after

he had come out, and always carried his gun with him. During these rides he had killed two coyotes and a badger, the skins of which he had taken off and stretched quite nicely, under Hugh's direction. He had had two or three chances to shoot antelope, too, but always close to the house, and so he had not fired at them, for Mr. Sturgis liked to see these wild creatures of the prairie near the ranch, and had asked that no hunting be done close at home. Jack had tended his live stock, and his ducks were now quite large and full feathered birds, and were very tame, and pretty well able to take care of themselves. When they were still little bits of fluffy things, Hugh had advised him to cut off the tip of one wing from each, and he had done so. The birds, therefore, could not fly, and wandered about on foot, feeding with the hens and dabbling in the brook. Hugh warned him that he would have to look out for them when the weather got cool, or else they might start off to go south on foot, and if they ever wandered off on the prairie the coyotes would surely pick them up at once. The calf elk had grown very large, and was annoyingly tame. It was sure to be where it was not wanted, and Mrs. Carter once declared to Jack that she wished some one would kill the little brute, for if she left the kitchen door open it would go in, and put its nose into every dish in the place.

Although he had many things to do, they did not take up all Jack's time. He spent many hours lying on the hills, watching the beasts and the birds and

the insects, and this seemed to him better fun than anything about the ranch, except the long talks that he had with Hugh, whose stories of old times were always interesting. He had gotten down his uncle's bird book from the shelf in the sitting-room, and had learned the names of many birds of the prairie, and from Hugh he had learned also how the larger beasts and birds lived, and what they did in summer and autumn and winter and spring.

One evening as Hugh and Jack were sitting on the steps of the bunk-house, watching the lengthening shadows of the mountains creep further and further out over the prairie, Hugh said to Jack:

"Son, your uncle wants me to go off and get a horse load of meat, and I am thinking of going over to Smith's Hole, to see if I can't kill a couple of blacktail bucks; they ought to be getting pretty fat by this time. I expect I'll have to be gone two or three days, and I thought maybe you'd like to go, if you can get Joe and Rube to look after your live stock. What do you say?"

"Oh, Hugh," said Jack, "that would be fine. Do you know, I have been out here now nearly four months and I've never slept out of doors yet. I don't know what a camp is. I'd love to go over there with you, and it would be splendid to see these deer. You see, I have never seen a deer since I have been here."

"Well," said Hugh, "I expected maybe you'd like to go, and I'd surely like to have you come. We'll speak to your uncle about it. I expect we'd

better start day after to-morrow, because I've got to look over them pack riggings, and see if they're all in order. I expect we'd better take two pack horses. We won't have much of anything to carry going, besides our beds, but if we get two or three deer, the horses will both have loads coming back, and I'd rather lead a pack horse than walk and lead my own horse loaded with meat."

Mr. Sturgis was quite willing that Jack should go. The following day was devoted to putting in order the pack saddles, blankets and necessary ropes, and the morning after, they started.

Hugh rode old Baldy, and Jack, Pawnee. One of the pack horses had nothing on his saddle, while the other carried the blankets, their few cooking utensils and provisions. Hugh and Rube put the load on the pack horse, and threw ropes about it and pulled them tight in a very short time, but although Jack watched closely, he had no idea how the ropes went over the load, nor why they held it fast. When they were ready, Hugh mounted, and, taking the rope of the pack horse, started on, while Jack followed, leading the unloaded animal.

Half the morning had passed without a word having been exchanged between the two riders, when Hugh, halting in a sheltered spot out of the wind, dismounted, threw down his rope and his bridle rein, and felt in his pocket for his pipe. "'Light down," he said to Jack, as he came up, "and let the horses rest a while. I want to smoke."

Jack was quite willing to do so, for he felt as if his

right arm would soon be pulled out of the socket, with the labour of dragging the lazy pack horse.

"What's the matter with you?" continued Hugh.
"Arm tired?"

"Yes," said Jack, "that horse pulls back so he nearly drags me out of the saddle."

"Sho!" said Hugh. "You ought to put a hackamore on him, and then pass the rope under your leg and take a turn of it round the saddle horn. If he pulls back then, it cuts off his wind, and he won't do it very long."

"I'll do it," said Jack; "wish I'd thought of it before. I'd almost made up my mind to turn him loose and drive him."

"We'll do that after we get a little further," said Hugh. "We can't drive that horse you're leading yet awhile, he'd keep trying to turn back and go home, and make us more trouble than it is to lead him."

"Hugh, I wish you'd tell me how you tied that load on this morning," said Jack. "It seems to be firm, and yet I should think the ropes would come loose and you'd have to tie it up every little while."

"Well," said Hugh, "that's something you've got to learn, of course, packing; it's a regular trade, and when you know how to do it right, your load stays on your horse; if you don't know how to do it, your load comes loose and makes you trouble from the time you start in the morning till you get into camp at night. I calculated that that would be one of the things you'd learn something about on this

trip. You see, it takes two to pack a horse; one man on the nigh side and one on the off side. Now, we'll probably get into camp early to-night, and have a chance to look round a little bit and see if there's any deer in the hills right close to where we camp, and if there ain't, we'll move on five or six miles further to-morrow, and then I'll give you your first lesson in packing. Let's look at this load now;" and he rose to his feet. They went up to the pack horse, and Hugh, taking Jack in front of it, told him to look at the two loads that hung on either side of the animal. "You see," he said, "they just balance each other, and that is the main secret of packing, to put the loads on the two sides of the horse so that each pulls against the other. If either one is heavier than the other, it is pulling down all the time upon its side, and makes the saddle and everything swing over that way; that tends to loosen the ropes, and is likely to make the horse's back sore besides. You'll notice that when I make up the side packs to-morrow morning, I'll weigh them in my hands, and if I find that one is lighter than the other, I'll put something into it to make the weights even. But I can tell you more in five minutes by showing you, than I can in an hour by talking, so let's move on; but first we'll make a hackamore for that horse of yours."

Hugh showed Jack how to fix his rope around the horse's head and nose, so that it made a sort of head-stall for it, like a halter; then when Jack mounted, he passed the rope under his leg, took a couple of

turns around the saddle, and the pack animal, after pulling back once or twice, gave it up and followed readily enough close to Pawnee's hips.

It was three o'clock in the afternoon when, after passing over some low hills, they rode down to a little spring, near which stood a grove of small cottonwoods. Beyond was a great stretch of rough, broken, bad land country where there seemed to be no grass, and which looked like a jumble of steep naked hills, separated by deep ravines.

"That's the Hole," said Hugh, "and it's a terrible good hunting-ground for deer and elk in winter."

"Why," said Jack, "it doesn't look to me as if there were grass enough there to feed a jack rabbit, let alone an elk."

"Well," said Hugh, "that's so; it does look pretty barren, but there's lots of feed there, all the same. There's little fine grass grows on them hills, and the wind keeps them always bare through the winter. Besides that, it's a heap sight warmer over here than it is on the prairie, close to the house. You wouldn't think there'd be much difference, but there's lots. Then, down in the bottom of these ravines there's worlds of good feed. It's a great wintering place for the elk and the deer that summers over on the mountains back of the house."

They stopped their horses on a little level spot, close to the trees, and dismounted there.

"Throw down your bridle rein, son," said Hugh, "and come and help me take off this pack. Whenever you're travelling with a pack train, and stop to

camp, the first thing is to take off the packs, and after the pack animals have all been attended to, you can unsaddle your own horse. Now, look here!"

Jack went up to Hugh, who was standing on the nigh side of the loaded pack horse, and saw him untie the end of the rope from the cinch, and throw it off the load in front.

"Now," said Hugh, "you go around to the off side and loosen up that rope, so that I can get it off this side."

Jack did so; first pulling at two or three different parts of the rope, and as he pulled at each, Hugh called: "No." At last he pulled on a rope which came easily to him, and as the part slacked toward him, the rope dropped off the forward corner of the pack.

"Now," said Hugh, "take it off the hinder corner;" and when Jack took hold of the rope about the hinder corner, it was loose and slipped off. Hugh pulled the slack toward him and freed the pack on his side, and then threw the big rope off the horse. "Now," he said, "stand under that bundle and let it down easy when I untie the swings;" and in a moment more the bundle dropped into Jack's arms and he put it on the ground.

They unsaddled all the horses and picketed them out. Hugh put the saddles and all their camp furniture in the brush, saying: "We won't make camp until we come back. Let's go out now and see what the prospect is for game."

CHAPTER XXI

JACK'S FIRST CAMP-FIRE

HUGH and Jack walked a quarter of a mile down the ravine, at whose head they had left the horses, without seeing any sign of game. Then, clambering up the steep bank to the north, they crossed a hill and entered another ravine. Jack saw that there was good grass in the narrow bottoms of these water-courses, as Hugh had said, and in almost each one of several that they crossed a little stream flowed. The sun was getting low and the air cooler, when, as they topped one of these hills to descend into another ravine Hugh stopped, made a motion of warning with his hand, and then, slowly lowered his head and backed away from the ridge.

"There's two deer just below us, feeding in the creek bottom, and I believe they're near enough to the ridge to shoot. We'll go round about opposite them and take a look and see what the chances are. I wouldn't be a bit surprised if we could get a good shot at them."

"How far below us are they, Hugh?" said Jack. "Not more than a hundred yards," was the reply. "I think we can see them from the ridge, and get

one, or maybe both of them. But, now there's one thing I want to say to you : look out you don't overshoot. When a man's shooting down-hill, the way we may have to do from here, he's terrible likely to draw his sight too coarse, and to shoot too high. If you get a chance to shoot, draw your sight down just as fine as you can, and hold low down on the animal. It is better to shoot under than it is to shoot over, anyhow ; don't forget this."

They walked briskly along, and in a very few moments Hugh said, " Hold on now ; I'll go up and take a look." He did so, cautiously peering over the ridge, with bared head, and then, bending down, he motioned Jack to his side.

" They're right there," he whispered, " and it's an easy shot. You take the big buck and I'll try the little fellow when he runs. Remember now, hold low and steady. If the deer is standing with his tail toward you, aim about for his loin, and try to break his back."

They crept forward on hands and knees, and not until they had reached the very crown of the hill did they raise their heads. Then they saw the wished-for game, two fine mule deer bucks, busily feeding on the green grass that grew near the stream. They were graceful creatures, one of them much larger than the other and with a fine head of horns ; the other had small horns and was evidently young. Their ears were very large, and their tails, which were white, all except a black tip, were constantly in motion. Both deer stood broadside

on; the larger one somewhat in advance of the other.

"You shoot first," said Hugh. "Take the big one, and remember, hold low."

Jack put his rifle to his shoulder, feeling as cool and steady as ever he did in his life, and aiming just behind the big buck's elbow, fired, and the deer dropped in his tracks. The little fellow made one or two jumps, and then stood looking, when Hugh's ball pierced his breast, and he too fell to the ground.

"Well," said Hugh, "that's a good job, son. If I'd thought we were going to get meat so quick, I'd a fetched a pack horse along, but I didn't much think we would. So I'll go down and butcher them deer, and you go back to camp and put a pack saddle on one of the pack horses and fetch it over here. Mind you take the saddle and the blanket and the lash rope that goes together; don't mix up the riggings. You'd better bring the pack horse you led; it hasn't had nothing to do all day except to pack its saddle, and it might as well work for its grub now. You can't see the camp from here, but I don't expect there's any danger of your losing your way. You know we crossed four of these gulches coming, and when you get to the fifth you want to turn to your right and follow up the creek, and soon you'll come in sight of the camp. Keep the sun on your right hand all the time. Do you think you can do it?"

"Oh, I guess so, Hugh," said Jack; "now that you've told me how many ravines we crossed; I

didn't notice, myself, I only knew we'd crossed a number of them."

"Well," said Hugh, "you've got to learn to take notice of just them things, if you're going to be a prairie man. Now mind, if you should not be able to find your way to camp, and think you're lost, don't keep on travelling; just climb up to the top of the nearest hill and set there, and before night you'll see or hear me. But I don't expect but what you'll find your way back to camp all right."

Hugh went on downhill toward the deer, and Jack set out on his return to camp. He kept count of the ravines as he crossed them, and when he came to the fifth, looked around to see if there was anything there that he could recognise. It all looked strange to him, but he turned to his right and followed the stream up, and, before he had gone very far, he noticed a clump of willows that he remembered they had passed soon after leaving camp. A few steps beyond this a grove of trees appeared, and a moment later he saw the horses. "Now, the question is," he said to himself, as he hurried toward camp, "can I find my way back to Hugh? I'll try hard, anyhow."

He loosened the pack horse from its picket pin, led it to the saddles, and choosing the right rigging, saddled the animal and tied the lash rope to the saddle. It was the first time he had ever put a pack saddle on a horse, and he did not feel sure that he had done it right, but he spent little time over it, thinking that the important thing now was to get

the horse to Hugh, so that they could bring their meat to camp before the sun set. He found his way back without difficulty to the place they had shot from, and from there saw Hugh, who had finished butchering, smoking his pipe by the two carcasses. When Jack reached him, Hugh said, "Well, you didn't have no trouble, did you?"

"Not a bit," said Jack. "I'd a notion at one time that maybe I was lost, for the ravine that we came down looked strange to me on my way back, but I followed it up and got to camp all right."

"Well," said Hugh, "it's a mighty good plan, when you're going along in a strange country, to stop every now and then and take a look behind you, and see how the country looks after you pass through it. Of course as you go along you see how things look ahead of you, but sometimes they look mighty different from the other side. I'd ought to have spoken to you about that before. Say," he continued, as he rose to his feet and looked at the pack horse, "who saddled that horse?"

"Why, I did, of course," answered Jack; "what's the matter with it? I kind o' felt as if there was something wrong when I started, but I was in a rush to get back here, and so hurried along without stopping to think about it."

"Well," said Hugh, "there is something wrong, but we ain't got time now to let you find out what it is. Don't you see you've got the saddle on hind side before? You must have cinched the horse up from the off side instead of from the near."

"Of course," said Jack, "I see it now. That must be what made it seem so queer when I was saddling; but you see, both ends of the pack saddle look alike. I don't think I would have made that mistake with a riding saddle."

"No, I expect not," said Hugh, "if you had, you'd probably have found it out when you tried to mount. Now, I'll put this saddle on right and then we'll take these deer to camp as quick as we can. The sun will be down before long, and we want daylight to cook supper and spread our beds by."

They packed the two deer on the horse. Hugh did most of the work of packing, but Jack helped now and then by holding up the load on one side, and pulling a rope or two. As they drew near the camp Hugh said, "We've got lots of daylight yet and can make a nice camp here, and to-morrow morning we'll hunt a little way on horseback. We don't want to have too good luck right at the start, if we do we'll have to go back home again too soon."

Hugh hung up the two deer to the branches of a tree, and then told Jack to go down to the stream and dip up a bucket of water, while he would gather wood and start the supper. By the time the water had been brought, the fire was blazing, and Hugh had their small mess box open on the ground and had taken from it a little piece of bacon, the coffee and sugar in the two cans, and a sack which contained several loaves of bread.

"Now, you see," he said, "we're in luck this trip, for Mrs. Carter gave us a sack full of bread, so we

won't have to bake none while we're out. All we've got to do now is to fry a little meat and cook a cup of coffee, and our supper's ready. You fill that coffee kettle with water and set it on to boil while I cut some of that fat deer meat." By the time the water was boiling, fat ribs of one of the deer were sizzling in the frying-pan, giving out an odour that made Jack feel very hungry. Hugh put the coffee into the hot water, let it boil for two or three minutes, then stood it off the fire but close to it, where it would keep warm, and told Jack to cut some slices of bread. When he had done this, Hugh told him to set the table, which made Jack look rather blank, for he did not know precisely what Hugh meant, but he laid out two of the tin plates, two cups, and for each a knife, fork and spoon, and Hugh nodded, as much as to say that this was right. The deer meat, the bread and the hot coffee, with plenty of sugar in it, seemed to Jack to make about the best meal that he had ever tasted.

When they had finished eating, Hugh said, "Now, let's unroll our beds and get ready to sleep, and then we won't have anything more to do except to sit by the fire here until we get sleepy." He pointed out to Jack a good place for his bed, where the grass was smooth and there were no stones or roots or bits of stick lying on the ground, and the bed was soon unrolled and ready for occupancy. Hugh made his own bed and then returned to the fire and again lit his pipe.

The sun had set, and the air was so cool as to

make the warmth of the fire very pleasant. Jack lay down by it and stretched out his legs in the comfortable heat. "Better put your coat on, son," said Hugh; "it gets cool mighty fast after the sun goes down. It's good for you to keep right warm until you turn into your blankets. If you go to bed feeling chilly, it's liable to take you a long time to go to sleep."

Jack followed this advice, and after putting on his coat lay down again by the fire, for he was tired and a little bit sleepy. "Tell me something about these deer that we killed, Hugh," he said; "they don't look like any of the deer that I ever saw in Central Park; their ears are big, and their tails are different. Are these the regular deer that we have in the east?"

"I expect not," said Hugh; "these are what we call blacktails out here. You took notice, I expect, that the tips of their tails were black; I guess that's what gives them the name. They've got another name, though. I have heard your uncle call them mule deer, and he says that that name comes from their having such big ears. They've got sure enough big ears, all right, and I guess that's a pretty good name for 'em. I have heard him say that 'way over west, toward the coast, there's another kind of deer that's the real blacktail; it's got a big tail that's black all over. These deer here are good meat, but they're a kind of a fool animal, after all. Sometimes if you shoot one, the others with it will just kind of jump round, looking to see where the noise comes from; they don't seem to have sense enough to run away;

but I expect that don't mean much except that they haven't been hunted. I've seen elk and mountain sheep do the same thing, and of course buffalo will stand and let you shoot at them as long as you want to. 'Pears to me always as if deer and elk didn't depend much on their eyes. If a man keeps right still they don't seem to see him; or, anyway, they ain't afraid of him; but if they once get a smell of him, they don't wait to ask no questions, but just light out of the country.

"You killed that deer mighty well, son," he went on, "you're getting to be steady as anybody need be. I wondered, when you drew up to shoot, whether you'd have any trouble catching your sight. I thought maybe you would, because this was the first deer you'd shot at; but you didn't seem to be a mite flustered."

"No," said Jack, "I didn't feel excited. Of course I wanted to kill the deer, but I was thinking hard about what you had told me of the danger of over-shooting. I don't believe I thought of anything else."

They were sitting by the fire, not talking, when suddenly from the hills to the north, sounded a series of frightful yells and howls, which made Jack sit up very straight. "What in the world's that, Hugh?" he said, seeing that Hugh had not changed his position nor apparently heard this dreadful noise.

"That yelling?" said Hugh. "Why I forgot that you'd never been in camp before. Now, what do you expect that is?"

"Why, I don't know," said Jack; "it sounded like a lot of demons fighting."

"Well, I'll tell you what it is," said Hugh, "it's just some miserable coyote that's found the place where we butchered them deer, and is telling all the other coyotes about it."

"But, Hugh," said Jack, "there must be at least a hundred there, from the noise they make."

"Not so," said Hugh; "I don't believe there's more than one. I told you the other day that one of them woodchucks could make more noise for its size than any beast I knew; but when I said that, I expect I must have forgot the coyote. Sometimes if two or three get together and howl, you'd think there was a thousand. They'd be a terrible beast to hear at night if one was anyway scary."

"I should think so," said Jack; "I didn't know what was going to happen when I heard that fellow begin just now."

"Well," said Hugh, "he and his partners will have a good feast to-night; but I expect you're getting sleepy, and we want to be up with the sun to-morrow, so maybe we might as well turn in now."

"All right, Hugh, I am getting sleepy and I guess I'd like to go to bed."

"Say we do," said Hugh. "One thing I'll tell ye, seeing that you've never slept out of doors before; when you go to bed, take off your coat, your pants and your shoes; the less a man has on him when he is in bed the better he rests."

Hugh filled his pipe again and put some more

wood on the fire, which blazed up brightly; and Jack, sitting on the edge of his bed, began to undress.

"Put your shoes and the clothes that you take off under the head of your bed," said Hugh, "then, if it should come on to rain or snow during the night, they won't get wet. You've got a lot of little odds and ends of things to learn about being in camp, and I want to tell you all of them that I can think of, because if you know them you'll be a heap more comfortable than you will if you don't."

Before long, Jack was snugly wrapped in his blankets, watching the flickering fire and the bright stars that shone out of the black sky above him. Presently Hugh turned into his blankets, and the fire went down.

Jack had been sleepy when he went to bed, but now he felt wakeful. He could hear queer little things moving about in the grass close to his head; the leaves of the trees rustled in the gentle breeze; the horses cropped the grass and walked about not far off, and each one of these sounds seemed loud to him. Every now and then there would be a burst of howling from the hills, and altogether, Jack felt strange. But soon he slept.

CHAPTER XXII

A LOAD OF BLACKTAIL

"WAKE up, son, it's getting toward morning, and I want to get started. *Levez*, as the Frenchmen say up north."

Jack opened his eyes very slowly, and pushed the blankets down from his head and saw the bright light of the fire and Hugh moving about it; but the stars still shone brightly from the black sky above, and there was nothing to show that it was not the middle of the night.

"Is it time to get up, Hugh?" Jack asked; "I'm awful sleepy."

"Yes, you've got to get up if you're going hunting with me. If you'd rather, you can lie in your blankets till the sun gets up, but you can't hunt if you do that," was the reply.

Jack pushed down the blankets, but the air was cold, and he hated to get up.

"Put on your shoes," said Hugh, "and come over and dress here by the fire where it's warm. The nights are getting mighty cool now, and I expect you feel it."

"Isn't it cold, though," said Jack, as he drew on

his shoes, and with his clothes in his arms ran over to the fire. "This is nice and warm, isn't it?"

"Well, you've got to hurry up now and dress; breakfast is near ready."

Jack saw that meat was sputtering in the frying pan, and that the coffee-pot was standing by the fire, and hurried into his clothes.

"Now," said Hugh, "I expect you want to wash your face. Hold your hands and I'll pour." He dipped a cup into the bucket of water, and, while Jack held his hands together, poured a tiny stream into them, while the boy washed his hands and face.

"Well," said Jack, "that's a new kind of a wash basin to me."

"Is it?" said Hugh. "Well, it saves you washing in the dark down by the spring. You may as well go down there though and get a bucket of fresh water, and we'll heat that while we're eating, so that we can wash up the dishes before we start."

Jack did as he was bade, and by the time he had returned with the water, Hugh had taken the food off the fire, and they began their breakfast. After the meal was over Jack went out and brought in the saddle horses, while Hugh was washing up the dishes, and after saddling his own, rolled up his bed and was ready to start. A few moments later, Hugh was in the saddle, and they rode off over the prairie, nearly in the direction that they had gone the night before, but keeping away from the Hole, so as to go around the heads of all the ravines.

"I wanted to get out early," said Hugh, "so's to

go over here a couple of miles and get up on top of a high hill by sunrise. From there we can see a long distance, and if there's any deer feeding, we can see them and figure how to get up to them."

It was still dark, but now in the east there was a streak of pale light along the horizon, and the stars above it were growing dim. They galloped briskly along over the dark prairie, now and then hearing a rush of feet and the stamping and blowing of antelope which they had started. Before they reached the hill of which Hugh had spoken the dawn was fairly upon them, and the eastern sky was red. They left their horses in a little hollow, and on foot climbed to the top of the hill, but it was not yet light enough for them to see very much. Before long, however, the limb of the sun appeared over the eastern horizon, and at once the air seemed to clear, and they could see a long distance.

"Oh, look at that, Hugh," said Jack, pointing north-west, "there's a big animal out there, and a little one near it. What are they? Why I believe that's an elk."

Hugh looked in the direction to which Jack pointed, and said: "Yes, that's an elk all right, and a calf with her; we don't want anything of her. I don't see exactly what she's doing down here on the prairie with that little calf; she ought to be up in the hills. There's four antelope right close, almost within gunshot; but we don't want antelope either. What we came after is deer; and there they are," he continued, pointing toward the Hole, where,

in a depression at the head of a ravine, three dark coloured animals were feeding. They were a long way off, and Jack could not tell whether they had horns or not ; in fact, he would not have known what they were, but he saw that they were not elk nor antelope ; their colour told him so much. They could not be wolves, for they stood too high on their legs, and had no tails that he could see ; so it seemed certain that they must be deer, or some other animal that he had not seen.

"What had we better do, Hugh?" he said ; "do you think we can get up to them?"

"Yes," said Hugh, "there won't be no trouble about that, but what I'd like to know now is, which way this wind is going to blow. The easiest way to get at them is to go around north of them. I think that ridge would bring us within shot, but if the wind starts up to blow from the west or north or north-west, they'd sure smell us, and we wouldn't get no shot. I'd rather set here a spell and see what the wind is goin' to do. They'll feed for two hours, maybe three, yet before they lie down. Let's just keep our eye on 'em and see how they act."

Hugh filled his pipe and smoked, and waited for the wind. For some time this did not come, and the smoke from his pipe went straight upward. Presently, however, a gentle air from the north-west carried away a big puff of smoke, and then it was calm once more. But soon the breeze began to blow very gently from the north-west, and Hugh, as he finished his pipe and knocked the ashes out from it, said :

"Well, I thought that was likely the way it would act. Now, we've got to go round them deer and try to get up on them from toward the Hole."

They mounted and rode briskly back the way they had come, for some little distance, and then, turning east, toward the rim of the Hole, went more slowly. When they reached the edge of the prairie, from which they could look down on the broken bad lands, where they had been the evening before, they followed the rim north, keeping a sharp look-out ahead for any possible game that might start there, and also watching closely the ravines which ran down into the Hole.

At length Hugh said: "'Pears to me that we ought to be pretty close to where them deer is. Let's go slow and careful now, and look the ground over."

The next two ridges were passed very cautiously, but on reaching the summit of the third, Hugh dropped his head and said, "There they are; we're too far down. Let's take our horses back to the next ravine, and come up here and watch the deer. They'll likely work this way before very long."

After they had left their horses, Hugh took Jack up to the crest of the hill and pointed out the deer to him. They were feeding on a hillside, a quarter of a mile away, but their heads were pointed toward the Hole, and Hugh felt sure that with a little patience they would get a shot. They sat there waiting, for more than an hour, while the deer fed about, almost in the same place. At last the biggest of them

raised his head and took a long look down the ravine, and then one to either side; then he started, walking slowly toward the Hole. The other two did not seem to pay any attention to him, but after the leader had gone fifty or seventy-five yards, one of the others stopped feeding and trotted after him, and these two walked along together, directly toward the hunters. The third deer remained where he was; he had evidently found something that he greatly liked and did not intend to leave it; but at last, finding that he was being deserted, he too raised his head and trotted after the others. He had not come up with them when they passed within seventy-five yards of the hunters, and Hugh said:

“Raise up now and kill the big one. I’ll stop him, and as soon as he stops, you shoot.”

Jack slowly raised himself, and resting his left elbow on his knee, aimed at the leading buck. The other deer was walking by the big buck’s side.

As Jack brought his rifle to his shoulder, Hugh bleated, in imitation of a fawn, and both deer stopped and turned their heads toward him.

“Now,” said Hugh. And as Jack’s rifle sounded, both deer fell to the ground. Hugh said, “Slip another cartridge in quick; that other fellow may get up and run off;” and they started down toward the fallen animals. The third deer turned, bounded gracefully up the hill, paused for a moment on its crest to look, and then disappeared.

“But Hugh,” said Jack, as he hurried down the

hill, "what made the other deer fall ; did I hit both ? I couldn't have done that for I only aimed at one."

"Well, son," said Hugh, "it looks to me as if your ball went through the big deer and killed the little one too ; but we'll soon know."

In a moment they stood by the deer, and Hugh, seizing the smaller one by one of its horns, thrust his knife into its chest.

"Well," said he, "we've got him anyhow. Then he bled the other deer, and then they looked for the bullet holes.

It was as Hugh had said, Jack had not remembered what Hugh had told him the night before about aiming low when he was shooting downhill, and had hit the big buck a little higher up than he had intended, but low enough to kill him. The ball had passed between the ribs, out on the other side, and had passed through the heart of the further deer.

"That's a pretty lucky shot," said Hugh ; "you might hunt a good many years and not do that over again. You've beaten me all hollow this trip, and have killed three times as many deer as I have. I expect you're what I call a lucky hunter, and if you only keep on trying hard, and don't get to feeling too big about your good luck, you'll do well right along."

"I'm surely going to try hard, Hugh. I don't think I have done anything very bad since that first day when I tried to hunt antelope alone. I think I learned a heap that day, and I have been glad a good

many times since that I didn't kill those first antelope."

"That's right," said Hugh; "I believe that was an awful good lesson for you, and I hope you'll always remember it. I ain't a mite uneasy but what you'll always do well in your hunting, for you're mighty cool headed. I have hunted with a heap of men that couldn't stand it to see game. Seems like whenever they saw an animal standing near 'em, they just got crazy right off. Why, I have seen men that would tremble and shake like they had the ague, if they had a chance like you had just now. Well," he went on, "I believe we might as well butcher, and then start back and pack up our camp. We'll put one deer on one of the pack horses and then bring the whole outfit over here and pack the other three deer on the other horse. We've got all the meat we want, and we can start now and get back to the ranch by night. I did expect to be gone three or four days but we've had such terrible fine luck that we've got all the meat we need, and it's no use stopping. If we do we're likely to kill something more, and we haven't got no way to pack it."

The work of butchering the deer did not take long; they dragged the carcasses a little way up the hill, turned them over to drain, and left them lying on the prairie. Twenty minutes' ride brought them to the camp, where the pack horses were soon saddled. The beds and the mess outfit were put on one of them, and here Hugh gave Jack his first lesson in packing, showing him how the bundles were

put on in the swing ropes, and then how the diamond hitch was thrown. After half a dozen trials, Jack thought he understood how the rope should go, and which ones the packer on either side should pull.

"That's enough for one lesson," said Hugh; "now, before we fasten this load on with the last rope, we'll throw one of them deer carcasses on top, and put the lash rope over it." This was done, and Jack for the first time helped to pack a horse, working on the off side.

"You're pretty small," Hugh said, "to pack yet a while. A fellow's got to be tall enough to reach up, so that he can put up a bundle on top of the pack, and so that he can get a good pull on the ropes, forward and backward. Your legs are a little mite short for that part of the work yet. After this, when you and me go out, if you're going to help pack, we'll have to pick short-legged pack ponies."

"Well," said Jack, "I suppose my legs will get longer after a while."

"You bet," said Hugh, "they'll be all right after a little while, and it ain't needful that you should do much packing yet, but it's mighty handy to know how to do it."

The other deer was put on the second pack horse, and roughly lashed in place, and when they reached the two animals killed that morning, one deer was hung on either side of the saddle, while the third was put on top. Jack helped to pack this load too, and did his work better because the horse was stand-

ing on a side hill, which added six or eight inches to the boy's apparent height.

"Now," said Hugh, as they were ready to start, "we don't need to haul these animals behind us all day long; we'll just tie up their ropes and drive them; they'll travel good going home."

Hugh coiled up the rope of each horse and made it fast to the lash rope on top of the pack. Then, mounting, they started the pack animals across the prairie in the direction of the ranch. When they had gone two or three miles they crossed a ravine, from the side of which bubbled a clear, cold spring, and here they stopped and took a long, refreshing drink. At the edge of the water were some tracks in the wet earth, which to Jack looked like the tracks of a small dog. He asked Hugh what they were, and Hugh told him they were the tracks of coyote puppies.

"They've only just left here," said Hugh; "likely they heard us coming and skipped out."

They had hardly come up on to the prairie from this ravine when they saw three half-grown coyote puppies shambling along only a short distance in front of them. The puppies saw the men at once, and galloped off, with drooping tails, and heads turned back over their shoulders, looking for all the world like three little dogs that expected to have a stone thrown after them.

"I wouldn't shoot at them," said Hugh, as Jack reached down his hand to draw his rifle from its scabbard; "I don't know how these pack horses

are about shooting, and if you were to fire a shot, it might make one of 'em buck, and get us into some little trouble."

It was nearly night before the ranch house was seen.

CHAPTER XXIII

OCCUPATIONS OF A CRIPPLE

A FEW days after their return from Smith's Hole, Jack met with quite a bad accident. Joe had driven the waggon around on to the mountain to get a load of poles, and Hugh and Jack rode up by the short trail to help him. While they were loading the waggon, Jack carelessly dropped the end of a heavy pole on to his foot, and crushed it quite badly. Hugh at once took off his shoe and stocking and examined the foot, but did not find that any bones were broken. He bandaged it with a couple of handkerchiefs, wet with cold water, and putting Jack on his horse, they returned to the ranch. The ride down the mountain side was very painful for the boy, but whenever they passed a brook, Hugh bathed the foot in cold water, which somewhat relieved the pain.

When they reached the ranch Jack's foot was badly swollen, and he was at once put to bed, where he stayed for two days. After that he was allowed to sit up, with his foot resting on a chair, and the next two days he spent chiefly in reading, though his uncle and the men often came in and talked with him, giving him the news. Hugh made a

crutch for him, and on the fifth day he was allowed to hobble about with that, but was warned not to put his foot to the ground, unless he wanted to go to bed again.

It was pretty dull work doing nothing, for Jack greatly preferred riding over the prairie to sitting on a chair in front of the ranch door.

The first day that he used the crutch, Jack amused himself for a time by calling his flock of tame wild ducks about him and feeding them; but after a while, the ducks having had all the grain they wanted, walked off in single file to the brush, and left him alone. He thought of getting one of the men to bring the elk to him, but this was such a stupid beast that he thought it would prove a poor companion.

As the men were leaving the house after dinner, Jack called to Hugh and said, "Hugh, can't you think of something for me to do? I'm getting awful tired of staying right here in one place."

"Well," said Hugh, "I wish it was so you could get on your horse and ride with me this afternoon. I'm going over into the pasture and then down round by the lake. I'd like right well to stop here and talk with you all the afternoon, but I can't do it. Them cows has got to be looked after. You surely ought to have some one to keep you company, though. I'll tell you what it is; I'll go down to the barn and fetch up Pawnee, and picket him around here close to you. Maybe he'd be sort of company for you."

"That's just the thing," said Jack; "I wish you'd do it. It's nearly a week now since I've seen him."

Hugh went down to the barn, and after a little while returned, leading the horse with Jack's rope about its neck. He drove a picket pin into the sod, not far in front of the boy's chair, and fastened the rope to it. Then he went into the house, and came out again with a cup in which were a dozen lumps of sugar.

"Now, son," he said, "I've got a job for you that'll keep you busy all the afternoon, and it's something that you'll like to do, and something that may some day be right useful to you. You put in your time this afternoon teaching this horse to come to you when you whistle to him. You can't much more than make a start to-day, but if you keep it up for a few days, you can make him so that he'll come to you just as far as he can hear you whistle."

"That'll be splendid, Hugh, if I can only do it; but how can I teach him? I remember reading a book once about a man who lived in Mexico, and he had trained his horse just that way; and I remember that whenever he had left his horse and was on foot, and his enemies got after him, he'd whistle, and the horse would come dashing up, and he'd jump into the saddle and ride away. You see, his was the fastest horse in all that country, and they never could catch him."

"Well, now," said Hugh, "there's no reason why

you shouldn't teach yours to do just that same thing, and yours is just about the fastest one in all this country; so you might be just like the fellow you read about in the book. Now, after a while, when the horse is feeding quite a little way from you, you whistle to him, and then pull on his rope and make him come up to you and give him a lump of sugar. Don't give him only one, and then let him wander off and pick grass again, and the next time he gets pretty well toward the end of his rope, whistle to him again, and draw in on the rope and bring him up close to you and give him another lump of sugar. Do that half a dozen times, not too close together, and the first thing you know you'll see him start toward you just as soon as you whistle. Mind you always whistle to him the same way. Are you a pretty good whistler? Can you whistle loud?"

"No, I can't whistle very loud," said Jack. "I can whistle a little, but I can't whistle real shrill."

"Well, hold on now; what will we do for a whistle? Seems to me your uncle's got a dog whistle somewhere in the house, that he always used with old Dan, that bird dog that he hunted with. I think I saw that whistle this winter in the cigar box on top of the book shelves. Hold on a minute."

Hugh went into the house and a few minutes later came out again with the dog whistle and gave it to Jack. "Now," he said, "if you're going to teach the horse to mind that whistle, you'll have to get

your uncle to give it to you, and carry it with you all the time. If he gets to learn one sound he'll mind that and no other. Try him now, before I start off."

Pawnee was busy eating grass, nearly at the full length of the rope, when Jack gave a long shrill blast on his whistle, and, at the unusual sound, the horse raised his head and looked about. Jack began to gather in the rope, and Pawnee, following it, walked up to him and stuck out his nose. Jack offered him a piece of the sugar, at which he at first sniffed rather suspiciously, and then ate and seemed to enjoy. He reached out his nose for more, but Jack threw down the rope and turned away, and presently the horse walked back and began to eat the grass again.

"That's all right," said Hugh, "you'll see that before night he'll come quick when you blow that whistle. Well, so long; I must be going;" and Hugh walked away to the corral to get his horse.

Jack sat here most of the afternoon, and from his chair trained his horse, and it proved as Hugh had said, that before supper time Pawnee knew that a blast on the whistle meant that he was to be offered a lump of sugar, which he was always ready to take. Jack was perfectly delighted with his success, and determined that he would keep up this education of the horse until it had been so thoroughly trained that it would seek him at the whistle wherever he might be. The interest that he felt in this lightened up the next two or three days

wonderfully. Each day he hopped about on his crutch a little more easily, and at last he was able to put his injured foot to the ground without much pain. He worked with Pawnee down in the corral and out on the flat in front of the house, and at last he took the rope off the animal and turned it loose, letting it wander where it would, and when he found that he could call the loose horse from a distance of a quarter of a mile, and it came galloping or trotting toward him at the sound of the whistle, he felt that he had really accomplished a great feat.

Hugh congratulated him heartily on his success. "I had a horse once," he said, "that I trained to do this, and there was lots of times when it was mighty handy to me. Most folks think that a horse is just a fool and don't know nothing; but it ain't so. A horse, if you treat it right, is a mighty knowledgeable critter, but most people don't know enough to see what there is in one, and think you can't get nothing out of it without you use a quirt, spurs, and maybe a club. Of course it's a mighty nervous animal, and it's always been used to being chased, and so it is scary, but there's lots of sense to a horse if you take it right."

At length Jack's foot was well enough for him to ride; but his first two or three rides were close about the ranch and on old Grey, which could be trusted not to make any sudden movements, and so not to oblige Jack to use his lame foot, which, however, was recovering rapidly, the cold water treat-

ment, which Hugh had insisted on giving it having proved very effective.

During this period of his confinement, Jack had seen more of Shep, the ranch dog, than he ever had before. This was a big yellow shaggy shepherd dog, very affectionate and a very good watch dog, but rather a foolish, puppy-like beast, that was not especially popular with anyone. Hugh had said of him, "That dog there thinks he's a runner, and he thinks he's a fighter too, and he ain't neither one nor the other. He'll start off and chase an antelope or a jack rabbit, like he thought he was going to catch it without any trouble, but the things run off ahead of him, not a bit scared, and he just runs himself down and comes back with his tongue hanging out a yard, looking, and I expect feeling, like a fool. He ain't never caught nothing yet, and I don't expect he ever will catch anything."

It was after dark one evening, when Jack and Hugh were sitting before the ranch door, and Shep was lying at Hugh's feet, that they heard a coyote howl right close to the house. The dog sprang to his feet and rushed around the corner of the house to where the sound had come from, and they could hear the patter of his feet as he raced down toward the blacksmith's shop. Suddenly from the shop there came a tumult of growling, yelling and worrying, a noise as if a lot of dogs were fighting.

"By George!" said Hugh, "I believe that fool dog has ran into a nest of coyotes." Hugh ran around the corner of the house, and toward the sounds,

which still continued, and Jack, grasping his crutch, half ran, half hopped, after him. In a moment he heard Hugh shouting, the noise of the fighting ceased, and as Jack reached the corner of the blacksmith's shop, he met Hugh coming back with Shep running before him.

"Well, now, what do you suppose I found when I got down there?" said Hugh. "Just inside the garden fence was this dog and six or eight coyotes on top of him, just everlastingly making the fur fly. It's mighty lucky for him that he's got so much of this long yellow hair; if he hadn't had, he'd have been eaten up before I got there. I expect he's some cut up as it is." They took Shep into the kitchen, and by the light of the lamp looked over him, and found that, as Hugh had said, he was bitten and cut in a dozen places. None of the wounds were very serious, but only his shaggy coat had protected him.

"Do you know," said Hugh, after they were again seated in the bright moonlight, "I believe that was just a scheme of them coyotes to kill this dog. You took notice, didn't you, how close that one that howled was to us? I never saw a coyote come so close to the house before. I believe he just came up here to tole Shep down behind the blacksmith's shop, where his partners were waiting. It was a pretty sharp trick now, wasn't it?"

A few days after this, Hugh and Mr. Sturgis looked at Jack's foot and pronounced it well. It no longer pained him at all, but sometimes he

thought it felt a little stiff as he walked. He now resumed his riding after the saddle horses and the milk cows, and besides this, went out almost daily with Hugh or with his uncle on their excursions in one direction or another, after horses and cattle.

One day, the cows that had been kept in the pasture were brought up to the corrals, in order that the calves might be branded. They were all put in one of the large corrals and then, one by one, the cows were cut out and driven through a chute into another large corral, leaving all the calves together; then the branding began. Fires were built just outside the corral fence, and the branding irons put in them to heat. Then, one by one the calves were roped, thrown and held down until the hot iron had been put on them. It took a long time to brand the hundred and four calves in this bunch, and by the time the work had been finished all hands were hot, tired and covered with dust. It was a relief to every one when the gates were opened and the calves and their mothers allowed to come together again.

"I'll tell you what it is, son," said Hugh, "working cattle and horses isn't all fun; there's a heap of hard work to it, and I believe I'm getting pretty old to do work of that kind. Fact is, you see, I wasn't raised to this sort of business. We didn't have no cattle in this country till about ten or a dozen years ago. That's the reason I always said I ain't no cowman and won't never be. A man's got to be brung up to the business to do it well."

CHAPTER XXIV

A BERRYING PARTY

ONE afternoon as Jack was up on the side of the mountain gathering saddle horses he saw far off over the prairie a waggon and two riders coming toward the ranch. He did not know who it could be. Since the horse roundup had left, no strangers had been seen. Soon after he had unsaddled, the team came in sight over the hill, and at length it was near enough for him to recognise that one of the riders was a woman, and that there were two people in the waggon. A little later, the party reached the barn and proved to be Mr. and Mrs. Powell and Charley and the little girl. They had come over to visit Mr. Sturgis. Mr. Powell wanted to kill some meat, and Mrs. Powell said that she had determined to come with him and to ask Mrs. Carter if she would not go up on the mountains with her, berrying. The visitors were made welcome. While they were attending to the horses, Jack said to Charley, "How are the wolf puppies getting along? Have they got tame yet?"

"No," said Charley, "I can't do nothing with them. They're just as afraid of me now as they were

the day we got them; but there's something mighty queer about them. With mother and Bess they're right tame; they seem to like to see them, and they take meat out of their hands, and like to have their heads patted and to be scratched. But just as soon as I get near the cage, they all huddle together on the other side of it, and if I go around to that side they run away to the other. Same way with father. They seem to be afraid of a man, but they don't mind a woman a mite. Two or three times I've been going to kill them all, but Bess begged so hard for me to keep them that I haven't done anything. She says she reckons she can make 'em right tame, but that won't do no good if they're always scared of a man."

"Maybe they haven't forgotten that you and your father caught 'em," said Jack.

"Maybe they haven't," said Charley; "anyhow they're awful afraid of father and me; they're doing right well, though, growing big and sleek and handsome. They make friends with the dogs too. Often I see one of the dogs with his nose close up to the bars of the pen, and the puppies all standing there smelling at him and wagging their tails. I believe some day I'll put on one of Bessie's dresses and go down there and see if they won't be friendly with me. Let's ask Hugh what we can do to tame them." As the boys walked to the house they overtook Hugh and put this question to him.

"Well, I don't know," said Hugh. "I've seen mighty few tame wolves. Fact is, I don't know

that I ever saw any, but I've talked with men that claimed to have had 'em, and they all said that it wan't no use to try to tame 'em without you caught 'em when they was little bits of fellows; a good deal smaller than these were when we caught 'em. I did know one man that had a wolf that he said followed him round just like a dog, but he caught that one when it was a little mite of a thing, before it had its eyes open. You might try starving these of yours, Charley; not give 'em anything to eat for three or four days, and then take some food down to 'em and make 'em take it out of your hand; that might make 'em lose that shyness, but I don't know as it would. Anyhow, it's worth trying. But I expect they'd make a heap o' noise nights while you were starving 'em; might cut your sleep short a little bit."

"I believe I'll try that, Hugh," said Charley, "when we get back. They'll be kind o' used to being fed by Tom while we're away, and maybe they'll strike up some sort of a friendship with him, and that'll make it easier for me when we get back."

"It does seem kind o' curious," said Hugh, "that they should have taken to the gal that way."

"Yes, indeed," said Charley; "they're just as friendly with her as can be. You ask her to tell you about how they act."

The three sat down on the grass near the kitchen door, and Charley called to his sister, who came out and sat down with them.

"Tell me about them wolf puppies of yours, Sis," said Hugh; "Charley says you've made 'em right

tame to you, but they won't come near him. How did ye do it?"

"Why, I don't know, Mr. Hugh," said Bess. "I used to go down and sit by the pen and watch them, and at first when I did that, they'd all crowd over to the opposite side and watch me, but after I'd been doing it a little while they seemed to kind o' get used to me and forget that I was there. They'd walk round and keep trying to get out, and sometimes they'd play with each other, just like puppies, and sometimes they'd get angry and get to fighting. Sometimes, when Charley was away, I used to take their food down to them, and at last I got into the way of handing them bits of meat in my fingers. At first they wouldn't touch it, but after a while they got so they'd take it, and they've been getting tamer ever since. I can put my hand into the cage now and pat them and there isn't one of them that will snap at me."

"Sho," said Hugh, "you must have a mighty good way with animals."

"That's so," said Charley; "she has. Two years ago she took a bucking colt that we had, that nobody could ride without getting all jarred up, and commenced to fool with it, and now it's her saddle horse, the one she rode when she came up to-day."

"Sho," said Hugh; "didn't it hurt you when he bucked with you, Sis?"

"Why, no, he never did buck. The first time I got on him he went off as quiet as could be. But I didn't try to ride him for quite a while, until after

I'd made friends with him. Then when he got right tame, I used to take him up to the horse block and get on it and pat him all over, and at last one day I jumped on him and sat there for a little while and then jumped off, and did this for a good many days, and then I tried riding him a little way."

"See there now," said Hugh, "that's what it is to understand how to treat an animal. If we had a few girls like you, Bess, working the horses on these prairies, there wouldn't be so many of 'em mean to ride."

Before supper was ended that evening it had been agreed that all hands should spend the next day on the mountain, gathering raspberries, which grew there in great abundance. It was arranged that the women should make an early start, and with Joe as driver should go up by the waggon road, while the others, on saddle horses, should ride up by the short trail. They would lunch and spend the day on the heights, returning in time for supper in the evening, with their berries.

By nine o'clock next morning, those who had climbed the mountain by the trail were scattered out through the raspberry patch, hard at work filling their buckets with the delicious fruit. An hour or two later the waggon arrived, and by midday all the pails were filled.

When Mrs. Carter and Mrs. Powell began to unpack their lunch, Hugh said to them, "If you'll wait half an hour before calling people to eat, I'll bring you something that you haven't seen for a long

time, and that maybe will help you out with your drinking, if not with your eating." He called Jack and Charley to follow, and taking a couple of gunny sacks in his hand, strode off through the timber. The three climbed briskly the tall rocky hill, and emerging from the forest on to the slope above, found themselves standing at the edge of a deep and narrow gorge, in the bottom of which still lay a snowdrift. "Now," said Hugh, "let's jump down there and fill these sacks with this snow, and take it back to the women. I know Mrs. Carter fetched a jug of cream along, and a lot of sugar, and if we take them back some of this clean snow, maybe she can make some ice-cream. How would that go with the berries, eh?"

"First class," said both the boys. Jumping down into the snow they scraped away the dusty surface and partly filled the sacks with clean white snow. Then Hugh shouldered the heavier of the two, and Charley Powell the lighter one and they made their way down the hill to the party again.

When Mrs. Carter saw the snow she declared at once that she would give them ice-cream for their lunch, and before long all hands were enjoying the unusual luxury.

Toward the middle of the afternoon the party separated again, the waggon carrying the women back by the road, while the others began slowly to saddle up to return by the trail. Bess was the first to mount, and set out down the mountain, closely followed by Shep, the ranch dog, which seemed to

have taken a great fancy to her. The others followed, but had not overtaken the little girl when suddenly they heard Shep bark furiously, and Bessie's voice calling eagerly, "Oh, hurry, hurry! Here's a bob-cat up in a tree."

Jack was the first to arrive on the scene, to find Bess sitting on her horse, pointing up into a big pine, at the foot of which Shep stood looking up in great excitement, barking angrily at a wildcat that was perched among the branches, half way up the tree. Jack's first impulse was to shoot the brute, but before he did so, he had a thought, and jumping off his horse he walked up to Bessie and said, "Wouldn't you like to shoot it, Bessie? Take my gun if you would."

By this time Hugh and Charley were there, and the latter was about to shoot at the cat with his pistol, but Hugh said, "Hold on, boy; let's see whether Bessie don't want to kill it."

Bess said, "I'd like real well to shoot it, Jack, if you'll let me. I don't like bob-cats. This spring, one of 'em carried off one of my setting hens, and all the little chickens died."

"Well," said Hugh, "you better hop off and shoot it; it's liable not to stay there much longer."

Bessie jumped to the ground and took the rifle.

Jack said to her, "Draw it down just as fine as you can, and try to shoot him just back of the shoulder and low down."

The little girl put the gun to her shoulder as if she were used to it, and in a moment it rang out,

and the wildcat, jumping far out from the branches, fell to the ground and was at once pounced on by Shep. When they walked up to it, it was quite dead. "Now," said Jack, "we'll take him to the ranch and skin him, and you can take the hide home with you when you go."

"Yes," said Hugh, "it'll make you a nice mat, only it's a pity the fur's so thin; it ain't begun to get good yet. Two months from now it will be right thick and warm, but the winter coat hasn't hardly started yet."

Bess felt very proud of her shot and wanted to have the wildcat tied on behind her saddle, but Charley said, "No, I'm afraid it might make that horse buck, and I don't want to get you thrown off on this side hill." Finally Hugh took the cat, and they went on to the ranch.

When they reached the house Jack and Charley skinned the cat and pegged the hide out on the grass to dry. After this had been done, Jack took Bess and Charley and showed them the calf elk, which was now quite big and had lost its summer coat and its spots. Bess admired it greatly. "It isn't nearly as pretty," she said, "as the young antelope, and it carries its head in a clumsy way, but it seems strong and graceful, and isn't it tame?"

"Yes," said Jack, "it's tame enough, and it looks nicely enough, but it's a stupid beast; it seems to have no sense, and not to care for anything except just eating. I like even my ducks better than this elk. Let's go and try to find them; they wander

about so that I never know just where they are; but maybe we can find them somewhere along the brook." After a good deal of searching and calling, the ducks were discovered a long distance down the brook. They were now as large as old birds, and fully feathered, and were pretty, graceful little creatures. Charley declared that the small ones were teal, for he had killed some like them the fall before.

"Yes," said Jack, "they're teal all right enough; I looked them up in my Uncle Will's bird book. They're what the book calls cinnamon teal. It's a kind of duck that we don't have in the east; it only lives out here in the Rocky Mountains and toward the Pacific Ocean."

That night Bess had a fine time telling the story of how the bob-cat had been killed. It had been started from near to the trail by the dog, which followed it so fast that it ran up a tree almost before Bess saw it. Then she had called to the others.

As Jack was going to bed that night Mr. Sturgis shook hands with him and said: "It was very nice of you, Jack, to let the little girl shoot that bob-cat, instead of doing it yourself. I like to see a boy do a thing of that kind."

CHAPTER XXV

AN ELK HUNT

AT breakfast next morning, Mr. Powell said to Hugh : " Do you suppose you could take them two boys up on to the mountain and kill three or four elk ? I want to talk with Mr. Sturgis to-day about getting some of these saddle horses of his, and I'd like to go on home to-morrow, but I want to take some meat with me. If you and the boys can kill it, I'll stay down here at the ranch while you're gone."

" Well," said Hugh, " I don't know why the three of us can't kill what you need, as well as four, and if Mr. Sturgis hasn't anything else for me to do, I'll take the boys up on the hill and we'll see what we can find."

Mr. Sturgis told them by all means to go. Charley got his rifle out of the wagon, Hugh and Jack caught and saddled a couple of pack horses, and they were soon climbing the trail.

When they had reached the plateau, they rode north for three miles until they had come to a little open park, where there was a spring and good grass. Here they picketed out all the horses to feed, and set out to hunt on foot. They passed through a

piece of dead timber and soon came upon signs of elk. Most of the tracks were old, and they had gone some little distance before they saw anything showing that game had passed along recently. The country here became more rough and broken, and the green timber grew in scattering clumps. As each ridge was reached, a pause was made, and the ravine below carefully looked over before they showed themselves above the hill. There were great masses of red granite and scattering pines and groves of quaking aspens, which made good cover, but all this ground had to be carefully looked over, so that their advance was slow. Both Jack and Charley had hunted enough now so that they did not talk, or, if they spoke, they did so in very low tones. After a time, Hugh, who was ahead, came upon a fresh trail made by eight or ten elk, and this they followed. The animals were moving along slowly, but feeding as they moved. Sometimes they would scatter out a little to nibble at the tufts of grass growing among the rocks, or to crop the tender twigs of the young aspens, but they did not loiter much. The trail was fresh and showed that it had been made within a few hours—since the sun had risen. Hugh told the boys that they would have to go very slowly and carefully, for they would probably come on the game soon after noon, when it was lying down, and that this was the worst time at which to approach any game, for then it has nothing to do except to watch for the approach of its enemies.

They followed the trail, hurrying where they

could, but being very cautious as they went over the hills; but though the trail grew fresher, so that at one place where they crossed a little stream, the muddy water was still standing in the tracks of the elk, they saw nothing of them. They had gone down into a valley wider than most of those that they had crossed, and were approaching the little creek which flowed down through it. Along the stream bed grew a narrow belt of tall pines, and beyond this was some dead standing timber with young pines growing among it only three or four feet high. As the hunters approached the belt of green timber, a stick cracked just beyond it, and, at the same moment, something was seen to move. A moment later, Jack, who was a little to the right of Hugh, and behind him, saw an elk, and without a second's delay, raised his rifle to his shoulder and fired, and the elk hobbled off a hundred yards and fell among some low junipers. Meantime, Hugh and Charley had run through the belt of timber and saw half a dozen elk among the dead trees beyond. There were a cow and calf, a young bull and three heifers. At the sound of Jack's gun the animals jumped here and there, apparently unable to tell where the noise had come from.

Hugh pitched his gun to his shoulder and fired at the bull, whose shoulder he could just see through a narrow opening between two trees. Charley fired at a heifer, but did not see her fall, and then, slipping in another cartridge, he fired again at a fat cow that was dashing along through the low brush and



“RAISED HIS RIFLE TO HIS SHOULDER AND FIRED.”—*Page 256.*

over the down timber at a rate that would soon have carried her out of sight. The cow fell, and Hugh, turning, called to the boys not to shoot again. "We've got three elk," he said, "maybe four; all the meat Powell wants, and all that we can carry down the hill in one load."

The boys came toward him, and they started to look over the ground to see what they had killed. The bull was dead; so were Jack's heifer and the two that Charley had shot at.

"Well," said Hugh, "we've pretty near got more than we know what to do with, but I guess we can take it all down, but we'll have to pack the saddle horses. Now, son, can you go back to where the horses are and bring them on, while Charley and I butcher?"

"Yes, I'm pretty sure I can find them," replied Jack. "I noticed which way we came and I don't think I'll have any trouble."

"All right," said Hugh, "we've got quite a job here, butchering, and I'd like to keep Charley because he knows something about it; but if you think you can't find the horses, you'd better stay here and let Charley go and get 'em."

"No," said Jack, "I'm sure I can find them, and I'll bring them." Jack started; the distance was greater than he had supposed, but he had watched the country as they were following the elk trail and he had no trouble in getting back to where the horses were. He tied up the rope of one of the pack animals and fastened it to the saddle, put the

reins of the two saddle horses over the saddle horns, mounted Pawnee, and, leading one pack horse, started back toward his companions. The three loose animals followed very well, and he had no trouble with them, and it was not long before all five were tied up in a little park close to where Hugh and Charley were at work. These had butchered and cut up the elk, and had dragged the meat up to the edge of this park.

Before packing the horses, Hugh sat down and filled his pipe. From the park where they were sitting they could see, through an opening in the trees, the broad valley where the ranch stood. The wide stretch of gray, brown and yellow was marked here and there by winding lines of vivid green, showing the courses of the little brooks; the tiny lakes, blue as the sky which they reflected, lay like gems in the sombre setting. Far beyond were the white bluffs, and again to the south the brick red point of a tall mountain, running up to black pine-clad ridges. It was very still. No breeze stirred the sprays of the pines; even the leaves of the aspens hung motionless. The air was fragrant with the odour of pine and sage, and soft and smoky, like an Indian summer day. It was a time for being lazy, and Hugh smoked slowly, as if he wanted to make his pipe last as long as possible.

At length it was smoked out, and he rose to his feet, saying, "Well, I'd like to set here all day, but we've got to get this meat to camp."

The heavy loads were put on the pack horses, and

then, using their lariats, they slung a pair of elk hams across the saddle of each riding animal, and, on foot, started for the ranch.

"I expect, son," said Hugh, as they moved off, "you'd have liked to bring that bull's head along."

"Yes," said Jack, "I thought of that. It isn't a very big one and I didn't kill it myself, but still I would like to save it."

"Well," said Hugh, "we might have brung it if we hadn't killed so much meat, but you see these horses now are all pretty well loaded, and we've got some timber to go through, and an elk's head's a mighty unhandy thing to pack, anyhow, and it ain't a very big head, so I thought maybe we'd leave it. You'll have plenty of chances before long to get a better one."

"All right," said Jack; "but I want to get a big head before I start back east. I'd like to get one bigger than Uncle Will has back there; that always looked awful big to me, and I'd feel proud if I could kill a bigger one."

"Yes," said Hugh, "that was a nice head. I mind when he killed it. I expect he was pretty proud of that, himself. Your uncle was pretty keen to hunt when he first came out into this country, but he don't seem to care much for it now; except bear, he always likes to kill bear, and I expect he likes to kill sheep, too."

"Tell you what it is, Jack," said Charley, "we've got a mighty good head on top of the barn, over at our place, and if you don't get one that suits you

before you go, if you come over, you can have that one. We don't want it, and it's a mighty good one, I tell you. Three or four men that's come by the place have wanted to buy it, but father wouldn't sell it to 'em. He'd be tickled, though, if you'd take it. He thinks a whole lot of you."

"Thank you, Charley," said Jack; "maybe I'll do it, if I don't get a good head; but I want one that I've killed myself."

"Yes, of course," said Charley; "but I mean if you don't happen to kill one."

They had almost reached the park, leading to the trail, when, crossing through some dense green timber, where the ground was wet under foot, Hugh stopped and said: "Come up here, son; here are some birds you never saw before." Jack dropped the reins of his horse and stepped up beside Hugh, who pointed out to him four or five birds, smaller than chickens, standing beneath a great pine, and two or three more perched on its lower limbs. "Those," said Hugh, "are what we call fool hens, they're some like blue grouse, but not near so large. They're the gentlest birds in the mountains. Just walk up to them slowly, and see how close you can get to them before they move."

Jack approached the birds with slow, cautious steps, and not until he was within ten feet of them did they seem to notice him; then, one or two of them stretched up their necks and looked at him, ruffling up the feathers about their heads in a curious way. The birds sitting on a limb of the

tree still paid no attention to him, but seemed half asleep, their necks drawn in, and their feathers puffed out. As Jack advanced still nearer, two or three of the birds on the ground walked away from him, while two others sprang up into the low limbs of the pine, and stood there with necks outstretched, gazing at him.

"Now," said Hugh, "we ain't got no time now to fool with them birds, but if we had, you could cut a stick, and put a string with a noose on the end of it, and drop it over their heads and catch one or two of 'em, maybe more. That's what gives 'em their name; they're so gentle that folks just call them fool hens."

Charley, who had come up, said, "I believe if I had a rock or two I could kill those fellows; but there ain't no rocks here, it's all just this muck, under foot."

"Oh, let 'em alone," said Hugh; "we've killed meat enough for one day."

"Well," said Mr. Powell, when they reached the ranch that night, "you youngsters have done well, and I've got my meat without working for it. I expect you all had a hand in this killing."

"Yes," said Jack, "but Charley did the best of any of us; he killed two, and Hugh and I only got one apiece."

"Yes," said Hugh, "Charley done well. By rights, though, we hadn't ought to have killed more than one elk apiece, but I knew you wanted meat, and there wasn't much time to talk about it when the

elk jumped up. By rights I oughtn't to have shot at all, for I might have known these boys could do the killing, but I saw the bull, and I knew he'd be in good order, and so I killed him; but as soon as I saw what was down, and spoke to the boys, they stopped right off. They're good boys to hunt with; I don't want to see any better. I don't know who taught Charley how to hunt, but he understands himself pretty well."

The meat was hung up to cool where it would be out of the reach of the coyotes and the next morning, with a loaded waggon, Mr. Powell and his wife drove off toward their ranch. Bess and Charley stopped behind for a little while, talking with Jack, who promised that if he could, he would ride over to the ranch once more before he went back east.

At last the young people mounted and started. Just as they did so, Jack called out: "Do the best you can to tame those wolf puppies, Charley. I want to take one of them east with me, if I possibly can."

CHAPTER XXVI

JACK RIDES A WILD HORSE

JACK had noticed that the horns of the bull elk, killed the day before by Hugh, were white and polished, and that the rough part near the base seemed to be full of little fragments of bark, while at the very base, where the horns joined the head, there were bits of dried, thin skin, and marks of blood. He spoke to Hugh about this, and asked if these horns were not now full grown.

"Yes," said Hugh, "they're hard now, and the velvet has been rubbed off, and when the velvet is gone they don't grow no more. A bull carries his horns until along toward spring, say in March, and then they drop off. I expect likely your uncle has told you how these horns grow, and I mind that you killed a bull, yourself, along in the spring, when the horns hadn't much more than started."

"Yes," answered Jack. "Uncle Will has told me all about how the horns grow. It would be hard to believe, if one didn't know that it was so, that these great big horns grow in just a few months."

"That's what they do," said Hugh, "and as soon as they are hard, and the velvet has been cleaned off them, the bulls begin to travel about and gather

up their families. It's wonderful to see the way an old bull will travel over the country, hunting it just as careful as can be, to find cows, and when he gets one or two or three, he rounds 'em up and drives 'em ahead of him over the country that he's hunting. I've watched a bull all day long, travel along the foot of a range of high hills, going up every ravine and hunting it out, just about as faithful as a hunting dog would, and a few days after, I have ridden in that same range of country and found the same old bull, with a bunch of eighteen or twenty cows and calves and heifers, that he'd managed to gather up in that time."

"This is the time of year when they whistle, isn't it, Hugh?" said Jack.

"Yes, for about a month now, sometimes for longer, you can hear 'em whistle to each other on the hills. I expect it's a kind of a brag; one saying, 'Here I am; I'm the boss of this range,' and another, on another hill, calling out, 'Here I am; I'm the boss.' I've seen it where you could hear a dozen bulls whistling at the same time. It's a mighty nice sound when you hear it a little way off, but if you're close to the bull that's calling, it sounds more like a part of the neighing of a horse, and ain't nice or pretty."

"Then the elk are travelling around a good deal now, are they, Hugh?"

"No, not right now," said Hugh; "but in the course of a week they'll be travelling and whistling. Just about now the bulls are in the finest kind of

order, fat as beef steers, but just as soon as they begin to travel and hunt for cows, and fight, they begin to lose their fat; and along about next month, say the middle of October, they get right poor, and ain't fit to eat. You see, at this time of the year the bull has his work cut out for him; he's got to hunt up cows, keep 'em together, drive off the young bulls, and fight the old ones."

"Did you ever see a fight, Hugh?" said Jack.

"Plenty of 'em," was the reply. "They charge each other, head on, and push and push, as hard as you ever see two range bulls push. Their horns clatter right smart when they come together, and there they stand, head to head, noses down, and just shove and shove. If both of 'em are the same size they may keep that up for an hour or two, but if one is considerable bigger than the other, he will push the little fellow back, slowly at first, but gradually faster and faster, until he gets a side push on him, and then the little fellow's got to be mighty spry, to get out of the way before the big one hits him with his horns."

"It must be great to see a fight like that," said Jack.

"Well, you'd think so; two big animals and with big horns like that, but really, it ain't much fun; they fight so slow; there's no jumping around, no quick work. I'd sooner see a pair of range bulls fight; they've got more go to 'em."

"Still, I'd like mighty well to see it," said Jack.

"Well," said Hugh, "maybe we'll get to see it

before this month's over; we can't tell, though. There's one thing I don't want to do, and that is, to camp in among a lot of elk at this time of year; they make so much noise with their whistling, and their running around, and their splashing water (if it's near a lake or a creek), a man don't get no chance to sleep. I've seen it where I've had to get up at night and fire my rifle in the direction of the elk to see if I couldn't drive 'em away."

"Hugh, if I were to tell that at home, in the east, I don't think people would believe me."

"Well, of course," said Hugh, "there's lots of things happens out in this western country that seems strange to people that live back east there. I suppose they could tell me a lot of things that happens back there that I'd find it pretty hard to swallow."

Later in the day, Joe said to Jack, "Jack, you're getting to be quite a cow puncher, but there's one thing you ain't done yet; you ain't ridden a wild horse."

"That's so, Joe; but I'm afraid my legs are pretty short to hold on to a bucking horse."

"Well, yes," said Joe, "they are a little short, but we've got a wild horse out here, or anyhow, a horse that ain't never been ridden, that I believe you could ride. Don't you want to try it now, and surprise your uncle and the old man?"

"Why, of course, Joe; I'd like to do that, if I thought I could stick on, but I wouldn't like to get thrown off."

"Well, now look here," said Joe, "you know that orphan colt? He's coming three years old, and he's just as tame as tame can be. Let's you and me get him into the corral and put a saddle on him, anyhow, and see what he does. I don't believe he'll be a mite afraid of the saddle, and I expect he'd carry you right off as gentle as can be. You'd feel kind of good if you could ride him up to the house and show him to your uncle and Hugh, and say that you'd broke him yourself."

"Yes, indeed, Joe, that would be fine; I'd like that, sure."

"Well, let's go down and try him now; he's over there in the pasture, and we can get him in and saddle him up, anyhow."

They had no trouble whatever in getting the orphan into the corral. His mother had died when he was a little fellow, and he had been reared by hand. After he was in the corral they walked up to him and put a rope about his neck, and led him back and forth. Then Joe got Jack's saddle and bridle, and both were put on the colt without any trouble. He stood perfectly still, but, as the cinch was being drawn tight, he turned his head and looked back at himself, as if he wondered what in the world they were trying to do with him. After the saddle had been put on, he was led up and down, and although he walked awkwardly, he still made no signs of giving trouble.

"Now," said Joe, "I know he ain't going to do anything. If you like, I'll get on him and ride him

round a little bit, myself, just to see how he acts, but of course if I do that then you can't say you were the first man to mount him."

"No," said Jack, "he seems quiet; I'll get on him, myself; but let's take him out of the corral and on to the grass, where it will be softer if he throws me."

"All right," said Joe; and they led the colt to the gate and out on to the smooth, level flat, where the sod was soft and springy.

"Now," said Joe, "you can mount here, if you want to, or maybe I'd better run him about a little, so that he can feel the string and stirrups flapping against his sides, and get used to 'em."

Joe ran a quarter of a mile down the valley, leading the horse, which galloped after him quietly enough, except that now and then, when one of the stirrups knocked hard against his side, he pranced and sheered off to one side. When Joe reached Jack again, he said: "He's as awkward as can be, and don't know nothing. Of course, he may throw you, or he may fall with you, but I don't believe he will. You better try him anyhow. Get on, and I'll try and keep along with you. Just start in slowly at first." Jack mounted, and the horse stood perfectly still. He kept on standing still, for when Jack lifted the bridle and clucked to him, and stuck his heels into his ribs, the colt, not knowing what these signs meant, did not move.

"Hold on," said Joe, "I'll hit him behind with the rope; maybe that'll start him." He did so, and

the horse took a jump or two forward, and then again stood fast.

"I'll tell you what we've got to do," said Joe; "I'll have to lead him for a while."

"That'll be a queer sort of horse-breaking," said Jack; "me sitting on the horse and you leading him around."

"Never you mind," said Joe; "it ain't breaking this horse needs, it's education, but he needs that a whole lot."

He put the rope around the horse's neck, and when Jack again lifted his bridle rein, and dug his heels into the animal's ribs, Joe pulled on the rope, and the colt started. This was repeated a good many times, and at last the orphan seemed to realize something of what was wanted of him, and Jack found that he could ride him about the flat at a walk, without difficulty. By this time he was feeling quite at home on the colt's back, and wanted to go faster, and once, when the horse was walking, he said:

"Now, Joe, I'm going to try to start him into a lope, so when I stick my heels into his side, you hit him with the rope."

Joe did so, and the colt started off at a clumsy gallop, but as he was not in the least bridle wise, Jack could not guide him, and in a moment he stepped with his right forefoot into a little washout and awkwardly enough fell over onto his right side, and lay there. His fall was so slow that if Jack had been a practiced horseman he could readily have

sprung off, alighting on his feet, but he was not quick enough, and the horse fell upon the boy's right leg. Happily the ground was soft, and the large wooden stirrup kept the horse's body from pressing heavily on the confined leg. Joe was beside Jack in a moment, asking him if he were hurt, to which Jack replied :

"Not a bit."

"Can you get your leg out? Is the horse lying on it?" said Joe.

"Well," said Jack, "he's lying on it a little, but I think maybe I can work it out."

"Don't try for a minute," said Joe, "wait till I lift on the horn of the saddle." He took the horn in both hands, and lifting on it, raised the horse's body slowly, and Jack drew out his leg and stood up. Joe kicked the horse angrily, saying: "Get up, you fool brute," and the orphan rose to his feet.

"I'm mighty sorry he fell with you," said Joe, "but I'm mighty glad he didn't hurt you. Now, you wait here a moment until I go and get a quirt, and I'll get on that horse and teach him how to move."

"You go and get the quirt," said Jack, "and I'll get on the horse, and I think I can make him move. All he needs, I guess, is to be made to understand what is wanted of him."

With the quirt in his right hand, Jack mounted again, and again put the horse into a gallop, watching the ground ahead of him, and doing his best to guide him where it was smooth. In a half or three

quarters of an hour the orphan had greatly improved in his method of travelling, and really seemed to understand what it was to carry a rider. A little later Mr. Sturgis and Hugh came riding over the hills, and when they reached the flat, Jack rode up to them on the orphan, and said to his uncle:

"You don't want to hire anybody to bust broncos for you, do you, Mr. Sturgis?"

"Why, Jack, what are you doing on the orphan? I didn't know that he'd ever had a saddle on him."

"He never did until this afternoon," said Joe, "but this new cowboy of ours thought he'd make a good saddle horse, and he's been riding him. He stayed with him good, you bet. The horse threwed himself once, but that didn't make a mite of difference to Jack, he just made the horse get up, and got on him, and put the quirt on to him, and rode him all over the flat."

"Well, my boy," said Mr. Sturgis, "I'm glad you had the pluck to try this fellow, and if he makes a good horse, I think we'll have to give him to you."

"Thank you, Uncle Will," said Jack, "that will be pretty fine to have a horse that's really my own."

They were still talking, when suddenly Hugh said, "By George! there's old John coming back," and looking toward the hill, they saw a rider, followed by two pack horses, coming down toward the ranch. It was John Monroe. He had left his daughter's home more than a week before, and was now on his way back to the north.

All at the ranch were glad to see him, and he, on

his part, seemed delighted to meet them all again. He unpacked his horses at the bunk house, and turned them all loose, as if he expected to stay here for some time.

That evening Jack questioned him about the distance that he would have to travel before he reached his home. John said he didn't know how many miles it was, but he thought it would take him about twenty-five days' travel to reach the Piegan camp. Just where this camp would be he could not tell, but it would not be difficult to find, after he had come to the country in which the tribe ranged. He said that perhaps it might take longer if the weather should be bad, or if enemies should be met with who might try to take his horses, or even to kill him, but neither of these things was likely to happen. The season of the year promised good weather, and enemies could surely be avoided by watchfulness and care.

Hugh and John had much to say to each other about the doings of the old days, and the more Jack heard of their talk, the more eager he became to see something of this strange life, which seemed to him so much more wild, and so much more natural than even the life on the ranch.

John Monroe stayed at the ranch for ten days, before continuing his journey toward his northern home. Before he left he invited Hugh and Jack to come north the next summer and visit the Piegan tribe. He told Jack much about the summer life of these Indians, and assured him that if he would visit

them he would be made welcome, not only by him, but by the whole tribe, and that, if he travelled about with them in their journeys after the buffalo, on which they subsisted, he would see a great deal that would be new and strange to him that he would enjoy. Jack was, of course, crazy to go. He even wanted to start now and spend the winter with the tribe, but Mr. Sturgis very positively vetoed any such proposition, although he said he thought it would be very good for Jack to make the trip next summer, if he could get away from the east for the length of time required for the trip. So when the time came for John's departure, they shook hands in the hope of meeting again another season.

CHAPTER XXVII

A MYSTERIOUS CAVE

"SON, these blue grouse are getting to be a pretty good size now; why don't you take your rifle, or maybe your uncle's shot gun, and go out and try and get a mess this morning?" said Hugh to Jack. They were down at the barn saddling up. Hugh was going into town to get the mail, and Jack was at a loss what to do with himself during the two days of Hugh's absence.

"Where had I better go, Hugh? Up on the mountain?" said Jack.

"No," said Hugh, "you'll find the old hens and their broods along the little creeks, right close up to the mountain, but not high up on it. I wouldn't be a mite surprised if you could get quite a few birds right up on the heads of the creeks that run down through the pasture. But say; there's one thing you want to remember; if you take your rifle with you, only heads counts."

"What do you mean by that, Hugh?" said Jack.

"Why," said Hugh, "if you shoot with your rifle at one of them little birds, and hit it in the body, there ain't nothing left except a few feathers. You'll

spoil all the meat. So I want you to shoot the heads off all the birds you see ; don't aim at the bodies at all. Fire at the heads, or, if they have got their necks stretched up, aim at the neck, just below the head. You needn't be afraid that you'll lose many shots that way. Young birds are right gentle, and they'll let you fire half a dozen shots at 'em, and won't move without they're hit. Of course it would be better if you had one of them little pea rifles, that don't make no noise and shoot a mighty small ball, but your gun will do, and it's pretty good practice shooting the heads off grouse ; you get to learn just when to pull your gun off. You have to get up pretty close to the birds, but they'll let you do that. Draw your sight down right fine, and aim at the neck, just under the head. You'll get so after a little that you can knock 'em every time."

Hugh finished saddling, rode up to the house, tied his bundle of mail behind his saddle and trotted off over the hills ; while Jack filled his belt with cartridges, and then, mounting Pawnee, rode off toward the mountain.

Before long he passed down into the valley of a little brook, and followed it up, looking among the willows and along the hillside, to see if he could discover any birds. He had not gone far before he noticed above him, on the hillside, some small moving objects, which he soon made out to be young sage grouse. These were not just what he was after, but he thought they would do to practice on, and dismounting and throwing down his horse's

rein, he walked toward them. In the brood there were eight or ten birds, about as large as hens, all keeping quite close together, and following their much larger mother. They paid no attention to him, and he walked up to within fifteen or twenty yards, and stood watching them, before beginning to shoot. They made their way slowly along the hillside, feeding as they went. Now and then one of them would run wildly about, chasing a grasshopper here and there, and at length capturing it, and sometimes two or three followed the same insect. As they walked along, they kept calling to each other with faint peeping cries, and if one got off a little to one side of the group, he soon turned and ran back to it.

It was rather pleasant to watch them, but Jack had come out to kill some birds, and, putting a cartridge into his gun, he made ready to shoot. At first they did not stand still long enough for him to catch sight on one, but he walked along slowly after them, and presently one of the grouse stretched up his neck and stood looking. Jack fired at it, and the bird fell to the ground, while all the others stretched their necks to their fullest lengths, and looked about to see what had made the noise. Before he could reload and fire again, they had resumed their feeding and moved on. Before long, however, he had another shot, but this time he missed. Again the birds looked about, and again started on. At his third shot the bird fired at, instead of dropping at once, made a great fluttering, and imme-

diately the whole brood took wing and flew off over the ridge and were not seen again. Jack's first shot had been a capital one, cutting the bird's neck just below the head. His third shot had been too low, and had not killed the bird at once, and its fluttering and flouncing over the ground had frightened the others.

He tied the two grouse to his saddle and went on along the mountain side. Nothing was seen on the next two streams that he crossed, but as he looked down into the valley of the third, he saw, quite a long way off, something that at once arrested his attention. Down in the flat was a coyote, jumping and prancing about, as if in great excitement, and quite close to it, sometimes standing still, and again running toward the coyote, which retreated, was a badger. For two or three minutes Jack sat there watching them, wondering what they could be doing, but the strange game—if it was a game—was kept up. He determined that he would get off and watch ; so leaving his horse behind the hill, he crept up to its crest and lay there, to try to discover what the animals were doing.

Sometimes the coyote ran very fast, almost up to the badger, which, in turn, ran toward the coyote, which then retreated, and when the badger had stopped his advance, the coyote lay down, rested his head on his paws, waved his tail from side to side, and sometimes rolled over. The badger then started to walk off, but before he had gone far the coyote got on his legs again and recommenced his

play. This continued for quite a long time, during which the animals worked further and further away from Jack. The badger seemed to be trying to cross the valley and go up onto the next hillside, and the coyote seemed to be teasing him. It was rather a mysterious performance to Jack, and he determined that he would ask Hugh whether he had ever seen anything like it, and what it meant. When the two animals had got so far from him that he could no longer see them distinctly, he went back to his horse, mounted and rode on. As soon as the coyote saw him, he left the badger and ran up on the hill, where he watched Jack for a few moments, and then went off, while the badger trotted briskly along up on the hillside, and presently disappeared in a hole.

In a ravine not far beyond this Jack found his first brood of blue grouse. The birds were half grown, and he rode in among them before seeing them. They flew up the ravine, but he saw where some of them alighted, and, riding on until he was near the spot, he dismounted again. He walked along very cautiously, looking everywhere on the ground for the birds, but before he saw them, two rose, with a great fluttering of wings, almost beneath his feet, and flew on further up the ravine. He had been looking so carefully for these birds that he felt sure that they must be hiding, and not walking along, for if they had been moving he would certainly have seen them. A few steps further on, his eye suddenly caught a brown shape on the grey ground, which in an instant

he saw was a grouse, crouching flat on the soil, its head and tail pressed against it, and its bright brown eye closely watching him. He slowly raised his rifle to his shoulder, and firing very carefully, cut off its head. A little further on, two that he had not seen flew, and then he saw another in the ground, but it flew before he had time to shoot. Then he saw another and raising his rifle just as he saw its shape, he pulled the trigger the instant his eye fell full upon it. It occurred to him now that the birds were watching him all the time, and that as soon as they caught his eye they realised that they were seen, and flew away. In this, Jack was quite right, for often one's face may be turned full toward a hiding bird, and one may all look around it without its moving, but if he looks fairly at its eye, the bird is almost sure to flush. Before long he had four of the young blue grouse, and going back to his horse, he mounted again.

By this time the morning was pretty well gone, and he hesitated whether to go home for dinner, or to spend the afternoon here beneath the cliffs. Finally he determined to ride up the ravine a little further, on the chance of seeing more of this scattered brood, and then, if he did not find any, to go home.

Following up the valley a short distance, a grouse rose under Pawnee's feet, and flew up the hillside, alighting among some low pines that grew at the very base of the cliff. Jack thought the bird might have gone into a tree, and clambered up on

the chance of getting a shot. When he reached the pines he could not find the bird, and after looking for it a little while, he sat down to rest, and to watch some little striped squirrels that were playing among the rocks just above him. While he sat watching the squirrels, he suddenly heard a rushing sound, so close to his ear that he dodged, and a great hawk, with long tail and sharp pointed wings, darted over one of the squirrels, and in an instant rose in the air with the tiny creature in its talons. It had happened so quickly that Jack hardly realised the squirrel's capture until he saw the hawk rise, and with a few strong strokes of its wings, swing up and alight on a shelf of the cliff, above the tops of the tall pines that grew on the hillside. Here the blue rock was stained white, and Jack made up his mind that the hawk had a nest there. He determined to climb up and see if he could not get to it, and learn what was in it. There might be young birds, and these would make capital pets if they could be tamed. It seemed a long way up to where the hawk sat, and the cliff looked sheer as a wall, but here and there were crevices and places where the water had worn away the rock, and he thought that perhaps he could get up to the nest.

The climb to the base of the cliff was long and slow. When he reached it he saw that it would be impossible to get far up if he carried his gun with him, so he left it here, resting against a rock, and clambered up toward the nest for thirty or forty feet, and then he reached a place where he could

get no further. But a little below, he had passed a narrow shelf, running out to one side, and going down to this, he made his way very carefully under the cliff to a crevice, up which he worked a short distance, and then this ran out and ended in a bare, smooth wall. He would have to give it up: the nest could not be reached. He thought it would be shorter and easier to follow the crevice down to the steep hillside at the foot of the cliff, instead of going back along the shelf, as he had come. Going down was easy, until he had almost reached the foot of the wall, and could see, five or six feet below him, ground on which he could walk. Here the crevice ended. It was rather a long jump down to the ground, and that sloped off so sharply that he did not feel sure that if he jumped he could stop himself. He turned around, therefore, and let himself down backward, feeling with his toes for some little knob of rock on which to rest his feet, but, as he let himself down the rock all seemed smooth, and he could find no foothold. He was now clinging by the ends of his fingers to the rock above, too far down to draw himself up again, and yet with his feet a foot or more above the ground. There was nothing for it but to let himself go, and he dropped. The slope which his feet struck was too steep for a foothold. He fell over backward, and rolled thirty or forty feet down the slope, bringing up in a clump of bushes.

Jack was a little shaken and bruised by his roll, but not hurt. He picked himself up and looked

back at the way he had come, and congratulated himself that it had been no worse. He started to climb up the slope again to get his gun, but first it was necessary that he should get out of the brush into which he had rolled. To his right there seemed a place where the bushes were thinner than those over which he had passed on his way down, and he turned in this direction to make the ascent. He had gone only a few steps when he stopped, for there before him was a great dark hole in the side of the hill. It was shaped almost like a door, high, and not very wide, and within all seemed black. Grass and bushes grew up in the entrance, and there was no sign that anything ever passed in or out.

This hole looked rather mysterious to Jack, and he wondered what there could be in it. He walked up to it and looked as hard as he could into the blackness, but he could see nothing. He wanted very much to go in, yet it was useless to do so unless he could see something when he got there. "If I only had a lantern now," thought Jack, "or even a candle, I could go in and see what is there. I'll bet no one at the ranch knows of this cave, and I'd like to find out all about it and tell them. That would be a good story to take back." He thought for awhile, and decided that he must make a torch; but what could he make it of? For a little while he could think of nothing to use. He remembered that in the books that he had read, people had always had birch bark for torches, or fat with which

to make candles, but he had neither. Then he thought of pine torches of which he had read. There were plenty of pines growing here on the mountain, but nothing that he could make a torch of. Suddenly he remembered that dried pine needles burn brightly, though only for a little while, and that on the ground not far from here he had seen a half dozen pine limbs, twisted off from one of the trees in some heavy wind storm. He thought if he could tie a good many bunches of these needles together, they would make a torch for him. He crept out of the underbrush and saw near by several of these pine limbs, with the dried red needles on them, and he picked a number of the bunches. Now he needed some string. "If I only had Pawnee here," he thought, "I could take the strings from my saddle;" but Pawnee was feeding far below him in the valley. As he cast his eye about him, in perplexity, he saw a yucca plant growing on the slope, and he remembered what Hugh had told him about using the fibre of this plant for thread. He climbed up to it, cut off a number of the long bayonet-shaped leaves, selected a straight dead stick, and went back to his pile of pine needles. Splitting the tough leaves of the yucca, he found that they could be used as strings, and with these strings he bound his bunches of pine needles, one beneath the other, to the stick, and soon had what he thought might perhaps serve him as a torch. Going back to the mouth of the cave, he again looked into it, and listened, but all was darkness and silence. He parted the low

growing bushes at the entrance, and stepped in, and then, lighting a match, touched it to the top of his torch. The bunch of pine needles flared up for two or three seconds, and then went out, but the light was enough to show that for six or eight feet further in there was a smooth floor to the cave, paved with small stones. The walls above and on either side seemed high. A second match, touched to another bunch of pine needles, gave another flame, lasting only an instant. Plainly, the torch would not burn from the top downward. The only thing to do was to light it below, and let the flames run up the stick. Jack lighted another match, took two or three steps forward, and then touched the torch at its lower part. The pine needles flared up, the flame caught the next bunch above, and then the next. Jack could see on the ground before him some feathers, a half dozen slender sticks, and, far back, raised above the floor of the cave, was a pale, dim thing. There was a whirring sound, something struck his hat, something else struck the torch, he dropped it, and it went out.

CHAPTER XXVIII

WHAT THE CAVE HELD

THERE was something alive in the cave, and Jack did not wait to see what it was. With two or three long jumps he passed out of the entrance and stood again among the underbrush, through which the bright sun was sending down its long sheaves of light. Nothing more happened, and as he looked back into the cave it was all quiet there. He was breathing fast, startled and excited, yet not exactly frightened, and when he reached the open air and had recovered from his start, he felt curious to know what had made the strange noise and what had hit him. It did not seem that it could be anything very terrible, for if it had been, it would have struck him harder and made more noise. He looked back into the cave, but the darkness gave no answer to the question in his mind. He could see two or three tiny sparks faintly glowing, which went out one by one as he watched them. This was the remains of his torch. He wondered what that dim pale shape could be, that he had seen for an instant, but too indistinctly to tell what it was. Though he was anxious to know more about the cave, he

did not feel like venturing into it again without a light, and he determined to go home and tell his uncle, and, in a day or two to return, better prepared for the investigation.

His mind was so full of what he had seen that he started down the hill toward his horse, altogether forgetting his gun, and when he remembered it, he had a long climb back to recover it.

It was the middle of the afternoon before he reached the house, and there was no one about to whom he could talk of his adventure except Mrs. Carter. To her he told his story, but she could throw no light on the matter, nor, indeed, could his uncle when he consulted him at supper.

"Why, Jack," said he; "that is very interesting, and you were lucky to find such a place. It was pretty keen of you too, to think of making the torch as you did. I fancy it would have served you better though, if you had put some wads of grass with your pine needles. It would have burned more slowly and steadily, and would have given you a pretty fair light. I do not wonder that you wanted to get out of the cave when you heard that noise and were hit. Were you much scared?"

"Yes, I guess I was, Uncle Will. My heart was beating hard when I got out, but the light seemed to cool me down right off. That's queer, isn't it?"

"Oh, I don't know," said his uncle; "it seems to me very natural. Wait till Hugh gets back, Jack, and then we three will go up on the hill, with plenty

of lights, and will see what there is in the cave, and where it goes to." With this, Jack was forced to be content.

During the next two days Jack thought a great deal about the cave, and on the evening of the second day, when Hugh returned from town, Jack met him at the barn, and while he was unsaddling, poured into his ear the tale of his discovery.

Hugh seemed much impressed, but ventured no opinion, though he asked a number of questions. "What did the thing feel like that hit you on the head, son?" said he.

"Why, it was something soft, and not very big. It just hit my hat a light blow, not much more than enough to dent it in, I should think, but there was the queerest noise at the same time that I ever heard. I don't know how to describe it. It was like something moving quickly through the air. Just the faintest sound you can think of, but it seemed close to my ear."

"Well," said Hugh, "I reckon you're a great hand to have things happen to you. Now ain't it a queer thing that you should just about roll into this place, and me live about here all these years and never know that it was there. You done well to make the light you did, and to go in like you did. It kind o' makes a man go slow to see everything black ahead of him. We'll know to-morrow what there is there, unless your uncle wants me to do something else."

"No," said Jack, "I'm sure he don't, for he said

that we'd all three go up there together and find out what there is in the cave."

"All right," said Hugh, "that will suit me first class. I expect when we get there maybe we won't find anything very strange, and then again, maybe we will. Caves ain't very common in this country, but I've seen a good many of 'em ; some of 'em where the Indians have been in, and drawed all kinds of pictures on the walls. And then away southwest of here, up in the mountains, there's lots of caves that the Indians used to live in. Some of 'em are away high up on the cliffs, right hard places to get to, but those Indians lived there, and you can see their bed places, and where they have had their fires, and sometimes you'll find the pots that they used to cook in, and everywhere, all about, there's lots of pieces of broken pots. But all that was a long time ago. I expect the Indians that lived down on the prairie, at the foot of these cliffs, were likely hostile, and the fellows that had their houses up in the caves lived there so's to get away from them that was down on the plains. I reckon you've heard tell of the Pueblo people that live down there yet. They live in regular houses, built of 'dobes. Some of them houses are like three or four built on top of each other, and they haven't got a door nor a window on the outside. They climb up into 'em by ladders, that they haul up after 'em, and then they're just like they was in a fort. I expect they got to building them houses because people were hazing them, and they had to have protection, nights."

After breakfast next morning the three started for the cave, carrying two lanterns and some candles. When they came to the place where Jack had seen the badger and the coyote, he told Hugh about it, and asked him what sort of a game these two animals were playing. Mr. Sturgis laughed when the question was asked, and Hugh smiled, too. "Son," he said, "your uncle, here, asked me that same question about six years ago, when he first saw a badger and a coyote acting that way. I have seen it a heap of times, and I'll tell you what I believe it means. You know, in these days, since there ain't no buffalo, any more, the coyotes are pretty nearly always hungry. I believe that a coyote sometimes, when he finds a badger out on the prairie, just keeps a-bothering him and a-bothering him until he gets the badger right mad, and gets him so he wants to fight. You know, a badger ain't a very good-tempered animal, nohow. Well, after the coyote has pestered him a while, the badger gets so cross that he just wants to get hold of that coyote, and the coyote keeps pretty close to him, and the badger keeps following him, and so the coyote leads him along, until presently maybe he runs across two or three other coyotes, and then they all pitch into the badger and kill him, and eat him."

"That seems mighty queer, Hugh," said Jack. "I didn't suppose a coyote knew enough to make a plan like that."

"Well, of course," said Hugh, "I don't know ~~that~~

it is so ; no coyote ever told me that it was, but I've seen them acting that way often, and I can't think of no other meaning to it except that. But a coyote is smart enough to do that, or most anything else. It may be that the coyote just enjoys teasing the badger, and making him fighting mad, but if that was so, I wouldn't look to see the thing happen as often as it does. A coyote's got a heap of meanness in him, though ; I've seen a couple of 'em spend an hour or two just bothering a big wolf, and I'm certain they did that just for the fun of it. The wolf was crossing a big sheet of ice, where a creek had overflowed, and it was pretty slippery, and he could not handle himself very well, nor turn quick. One of the coyotes would run pretty close in front of him, and the wolf would make a grab at him, and while he was doing that, the other coyote would run up behind him and nip him. Why, them two little rascals had a heap of fun with that big wolf before he got off the ice and on to the bare ground, where he had a good footing."

Before long they reached the place where Jack told them they must leave their horses, and then they started up the hill. Hugh said, " We'd better all take our ropes with us ; we don't know but what we might need 'em when we get up there." They clambered up the steep ascent, Jack in advance, and feeling quite important at the thought that he was now acting as guide for Hugh and his uncle. Once, when they stopped to rest, he pointed out where the hawk's nest was, and showed them

where he had rolled down the hill and into the bushes.

"It's a wonder you didn't break your neck," said his uncle.

"Well," said Hugh, "it would be a wonder if we didn't know that boys are all the time getting into scrapes, where a grown man would be killed, and the boys come out of it without even getting scratched up." As he said this he looked hard at Jack, who thought he must be referring to his scrape with the mountain lion.

It was not long before they were all standing in the brush, at the entrance to the cave.

"Well," said Mr. Sturgis, as he peered into the opening, "it's black enough in there, certainly."

"Dark as a wolf's mouth," said Hugh.

They lighted the two lanterns, and giving Jack a candle, they prepared to go in.

"Do you want to lead the way, Jack?" said his uncle, "or shall one of us go first?"

"No," said Jack, "I'd like to be first to go in. You know, I feel as if this cave belonged to me."

"That's right, son," said Hugh; "you're the leader of this party. Go right in, and we'll follow you. Only I don't want you to go too fast, or too far ahead. I've seen these caves sometimes where there's a big drop off in the bottom, and I'd hate almightily to be following you and see you fall off into a big hole. You go ahead, but go mighty slow, and we'll be right close behind you. You two might leave your guns out here, I don't reckon

there's nothing to hurt anybody inside. I don't see no signs where anybody has been in this cave this season, except where son walked the other day."

Mr. Sturgis and Jack left their guns here, but Hugh retained his. Then the three went into the cave, Jack a little in advance. They had made only two or three steps into it when Jack again heard the queer whirring noise, and saw Hugh suddenly strike at something with his hand, and then heard a faint, squeaking cry, and a sound as of something soft striking the ground.

"There's what hit you," said Hugh.

"Oh, what is it?" said Jack.

"Bats," said Hugh. "I suspicioned it was them, from what you said, but I wan't certain. They can't do no harm, but look here!" and Hugh stooped and picked up two or three feathers, and one of the slender sticks that Jack had noticed the day before, and said: "This has been a sacred place for the Indians. See these presents? These are eagle feathers, and here are a lot of arrows that have been given, maybe, to the Sun."

"But those look pretty old, Hugh," said Mr. Sturgis.

"Yes," was the reply, "these were left here a long time ago. Don't ye see they've got stone points? This here arrow looks like a Cheyenne arrow, but it's old."

"There, Uncle Will!" said Jack, interrupting, "There's that white thing. Let's see what that is."

They moved forward a little, very slowly, and in a moment saw that the cave was a small one, not more than forty feet long. On a bed of stones, raised above the floor lay a whitish bundle, about three feet long and two wide, tied up with leather thongs.

"Ha!" said Hugh.

"What is it, Hugh?" said Jack.

"Why don't you see?" said Hugh. "This here cave is a grave and that's the body of a person that was buried here."

"It must have been a little bit of a child, then," said Jack.

"Not so," Hugh answered, "that's a grown person, either a man or a woman. That's the way they tie 'em up in bundles when they bury 'em. I expect that Indian was put here a long time ago." Hugh put down his lantern, bent forward and took hold of the bundle by either end, and lifted it from the ground. It seemed to weigh very little, and as he replaced it on its bed of stones, he repeated, "A long time ago. Why, that bundle don't weigh nothing. There can't be nothing in it except just the very driest kind of bones, and that hide that it's wrapped in is just like paper; when I lifted it, my fingers went right through it."

Jack stared at the bundle, wondering how long it had been here, who it had been, and thinking of the life that it had led so long ago. Meantime, the other two had turned aside and were looking about the cave, which was only ten or twelve feet wide.

Hugh picked up an earthenware pot, which stood at one end of the bed of stones, and calling Jack, showed it to him. By the light of the lantern it seemed to be dark red and grey, and it had once held something, as its sides and bottom, within, were dark with crusted dust. "I expect when they buried this fellow," said Hugh, "they left some grub for him to eat, in this pot." Near the pot, but resting on the floor of the cave, was a small sack made of what seemed like leather. This, when Jack felt of it, seemed heavy. The covering was hard and dry.

On the walls at either side of the cave were scratched in the rock, rude figures of men, a great circle with lines starting out from it, which Hugh said meant the Sun, and a rude figure of a bird with a great hooked beak—the Thunder Bird.

After they had satisfied their curiosity, Mr. Sturgis and Hugh turned to go, but Jack lingered behind. "Oh, Hugh," he called, "can't we take this bundle with us? I'm sure it would be a greater curiosity, back east, than the mummies from Egypt that I have seen in the museum there."

"Well now, son," said Hugh, "I don't reckon I'd bother that fellow, if I was you. Fetch the pot and that little sack along with you, if you want 'em, and then come out here in the sunshine, and we'll talk about it." They sat down by the mouth of the cave, and Hugh and Mr. Sturgis filled their pipes.

"Now, look here, son," said Hugh, "how would

you like it if some day some fellow was to come along to the place where your great-great-grandfather had been buried, and should talk about carrying off his bones for a curiosity?"

"Well," said Jack, "I don't suppose I'd like it very much."

"I don't expect you would," said Hugh, "and the Indians feel the same way about their dead grandfathers that you might feel about yours. You don't want that bundle in there for anything except because it's a curiosity, and if I was you, I wouldn't bother it. It can't do no one any harm for you to take these other things; they're real curiosities, because they're the old-time things the Indians used to make and use; but I wouldn't bother them bones. Let's see what you've got."

They opened the sack carefully, but the covering of hide tore to pieces as they tried to unwrap it. Hugh spread out his coat, so that nothing might be lost and all bent eagerly forward to see what the relics might be. The largest thing was a great pipe made of black carved stone; then there were eight arrow heads of black, white and brown flint, finely worked, and one smaller piece of flint, shaped a little like an arrow head, but which Hugh said was used in painting skins.

When they were all unwrapped, Hugh said: "There, son, you've sure got some real old relics, now. I don't know as I ever see a nicer lot of arrow points, and I'm sure I never see a pipe like that. Them things is mighty old. I wouldn't be a

mite surprised if that fellow died before America was discovered."

Jack was delighted with the find. He still felt that he would like to have the bundle, and, above all, would like to know what there was inside of it, but he made up his mind that it was better to do as Hugh had said. After they had reached their horses, he wrapped the pot carefully up in his coat and tied it to the horn of his saddle, and all the way home he rode with his hand on it, so that it should not be jarred and broken.

When they reached home he spread his trophies out on the kitchen table to show to Mrs. Carter, and said to her, "Won't these make a great show in my room in New York?"

CHAPTER XXIX

SWIFTFOOT IN NEW YORK

AT last the time approached when Mr. Sturgis and Jack were to leave the ranch and take their departure for the distant east. The weather had long been growing cooler, and was now cold. The leaves of the aspens had turned yellow, and one by one had loosed their holds upon the trees, and twirled slowly toward the ground. The bull elk had ceased whistling. The deer had taken on their winter coats. The lake was frozen, and the migrating ducks and geese had gone. Snow storms were more frequent, and often the ground was white for days at a time, until some interval of mild weather melted the snow again.

One day, some weeks after the Powells' last visit, Charley had driven over in the waggon and brought Jack a wolf puppy, now large and well grown. It was a great grey animal, heavily coated, sleek, smooth, and in good condition, with a long, pointed head, which looked a little like that of a collie dog. Though perfectly tame with Charley, the wolf was shy of strangers, and at first, when approached by Jack or any of the men at the ranch,

seemed timid, and shrank for protection behind young Powell. Charley had foreseen this, and had arranged to spend two or three days at the ranch, in order that the wolf might learn to know his master.

"If I leave him here strange to you, you see," he said, "he'll either leave you when I go away, and come back to the ranch, or else he'll run away and become wild, and I don't want to turn no wolves loose on this range. I tried what Hugh told me to with the pups, and now they're all tame as the dogs."

While Charley stayed, Jack devoted his whole time to making friends with the wolf, and everybody at the ranch was as kind to it as possible. After a day or two Hugh and Jack succeeded in overcoming the wolf's suspicions, and had no difficulty in calling it to them and in putting their hands on it. It did not like to be held, and, at first, if firmly grasped, would struggle and snap, in its effort to escape, but the biting seemed to be more a threat than an effort to really bite, and it soon learned that no harm was intended to it. After the wolf had come to be no longer afraid of Jack, Charley neglected it, paying it no attention, while Jack fed it, petted it, and played with it. He was surprised to find how much like a young dog it was, how readily it responded to his advances, and how precisely it resembled a dog in the way it showed pleasure, fear, or suspicion. Hugh made for the wolf a collar of rawhide, to which, at first, it ob-

jected, trying hard to rub it off against the ground, and to push it from its neck with its paws, but after a little it became accustomed to this. Two or three times Jack and Charley ventured to ride out over the prairie with the wolf following them. Their rides, though short, were often fast, yet the wolf never seemed to have any trouble in keeping up with the horses, and sometimes when they were galloping quite fast it would trot along by the side of one of them without seeming at all hurried. From this, Jack called him Swiftfoot.

When it came time for Charley to go, he and Jack parted with not a little sadness on both sides. They had grown fond of each other during the summer, and both regretted Jack's coming absence. Charley looked back a good many times before the waggon disappeared over the hill, and Jack, who stood at the ranch door, holding Swiftfoot by his collar, did not turn away until his friend had quite disappeared from view. The wolf, too, seemed uneasy at the parting, and puzzled as well. He looked at the waggon, and then at Jack, and wagged his tail, and once or twice struggled to get away, as if he wished to follow Charley, but he soon forgot his doubts, and later in the day took great delight in a game of ball with Jack out on the flat.

A few days later, Mr. Sturgis and Jack left the ranch for the railroad. Again Hugh drove them in, and with the same team of horses that had taken them out six months before. Swiftfoot was

placed in a wooden cage, immediately behind the seat of the waggon, where he would be close to Jack, who petted and talked to him until he had become a little used to his strange surroundings and to the motion of the waggon.

When the railroad station was reached, quite a crowd gathered on the platform to inspect Swiftfoot, but before long the train pulled in, and the crate holding the wolf was put in the baggage car. The train had scarcely started before Jack, who was anxious about his pet, proposed to his uncle that they should go forward and see how the wolf was getting along, and they did so. The baggage master seemed very glad to see them. He said to Mr. Sturgis, as soon as he entered the car: "See here, partner, I don't like that crate you put aboard here. 'Pears to me it's mighty flimsy, and if that animal in there takes a notion to break out, he might eat me up. I'm afraid of him."

"Oh," said Mr. Sturgis, "he can't get out, and if he could, he wouldn't hurt you. Look over there," and he pointed to Jack, who was sitting on the crate, talking to Swiftfoot, who had his nose through the bars, licking Jack's hand, and was beating a rapid tattoo on the sides of the crate with his wagging tail.

"Oh, Uncle Will!" called Jack, "can't I let him out? He's awful frightened in here, and I think if he had a chance to run up and down the car a few times, and to make friends with the baggage master, he wouldn't mind it so much."

"Hold on! hold on, young fellow!" said the baggage-master, "I don't want to make friends with him. You keep him behind them bars, and we'll be just as good friends as I want to be."

"Oh, I wish you'd let me take him out, just so that he can smell around. I'll put a rope on him, and won't let him get away. Come up here and pat him, and see how friendly he is. He was awful scared, though, when I first came in. He was all crouched up in one corner of the box, and his eyes were shining fearfully. He looked savage."

"Why," said the baggage master, who seemed to be recovering his nerves, "he does seem gentle, don't he?"

"Yes," said Mr. Sturgis, "he's perfectly tame. We've had him around the ranch there for a long time, but I presume he's frightened at all the noise and the motion. I really think if you would let the boy take him out and show him the inside of the car, and would try to make friends with him yourself, you'd get to like him. I'll make it worth your while if you do."

The man went up to the cage, and, after a little persuasion by Jack, patted the head of the wolf, which seemed grateful for attention and sympathy from anyone. Then he consented that the crate should be opened and the wolf led about the car by Jack, but while this was being done, he took his seat on top of a tall pile of trunks which reached nearly to the roof. Before long, however, he came down from there and was petting the wolf, seeming almost

as much interested in him as his owner, and when at length Jack put Swiftfoot again in his crate, the wolf, although howling after him, no longer seemed terrified, as at first.

Jack made frequent visits to the baggage car, and at each change of baggage masters, the operation of introducing the new one to the wolf was repeated. So the journey was made between the West and New York, but before they reached that city Mr. Sturgis told Jack that Swiftfoot was by long odds the most expensive piece of baggage that he had ever carried with him on the road.

In the big depot in New York, where the trains come hurrying in, and from which they hurry out, where there are always crowds of people going, and other crowds coming, and others, still, waiting for the arrival of friends, Mr. and Mrs. Danvers stood watching the passengers that were walking out from the nine-forty express.

"They ought to have come before this, John," said Mrs. Danvers. "Do you think they could have missed the train?"

"Wait a little;" said her husband; "there come some more people."

Far down the platform they could see a tall man hurrying along, and by his side a well grown boy, leading an enormous grey dog.

"That looks like Will, but it can't be he, for that isn't Johnny with him," said Mrs. Danvers.

"No," said her husband, "that isn't our boy."

They continued to watch the distant people as they approached, but Mrs. Danvers did not see her boy. Suddenly, she was half crushed by a vigorous embrace, and turning, saw beside her, her son, but a very different son from him who had left her in the spring. Then, he had been a little fellow ; now, he seemed to her a young man. Then, he was white, slender and listless ; now, he was brown, broad-shouldered and boisterous. By his side stood a great grey dog, with lowered head and tail, looking up with suspicious eyes at the hurrying crowds about him.

"Why, Johnny, Johnny," said his mother, "can this be you? It isn't; I am sure it isn't. Will Sturgis, what have you done? I want my boy again. You have brought me a big bear."

Jack's father was hardly less astonished and delighted, but he showed less excitement.

"Yes," said Mr. Sturgis to his sister, "I have brought you back a very different boy from the one I took away. I think after you have had a chance to see him, and to talk with him, you will find that he is a better boy all around. In fact, I think I can say that when Jack left here six months ago he stopped being a boy and began to be a man."

"What is that enormous creature you have there, Johnny?"

"Why, mother, that's Swiftfoot, my tame wolf. He's as gentle as can be, and I expect you'll find him a real good house dog."

"Come along," said Mr. Danvers; "let us walk

home. The night is fine, and I hardly thought it worth while to have the carriage here. Bring your checks along and we'll send up for the baggage right away."

Jack and his mother found the walk home a very short one. Mrs. Danvers took her son's arm and leaned on it, while Jack carried his rifle and led Swiftfoot with the other hand. He was happy to see his mother again, and proud to be leading his wolf through New York streets. He thought what fun it would be to show Swiftfoot to his old school-mates here, none of whom had ever seen a wolf, and of how much he would have to tell them of the western life, about which they knew nothing.

When they reached the house, Aunt Hannah was lying in wait to bid her boy welcome. She had nursed him from his tiniest babyhood, and he was not surprised to have her throw her arms around him and kiss him, while tears of gladness ran down her cheeks. After a moment of congratulation from her, he dragged Swiftfoot forward, and said, "Here Hannah, is a new friend that I want you to like. It's Swiftfoot, my tame wolf."

"A wolf!" shrieked Hannah. "Oh, lordy!" And she flew through the dining-room and slammed the pantry door behind her.

CENTRAL CIRCULATION
CHILDREN'S ROOM

THE END.

